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[SPECIAL REPORT]

EVOLVE

BUILDING A D2C BRAND IN INDIA

THE OPPORTUNITIES & WHY IT IS THE RIGHT TIME NOW!

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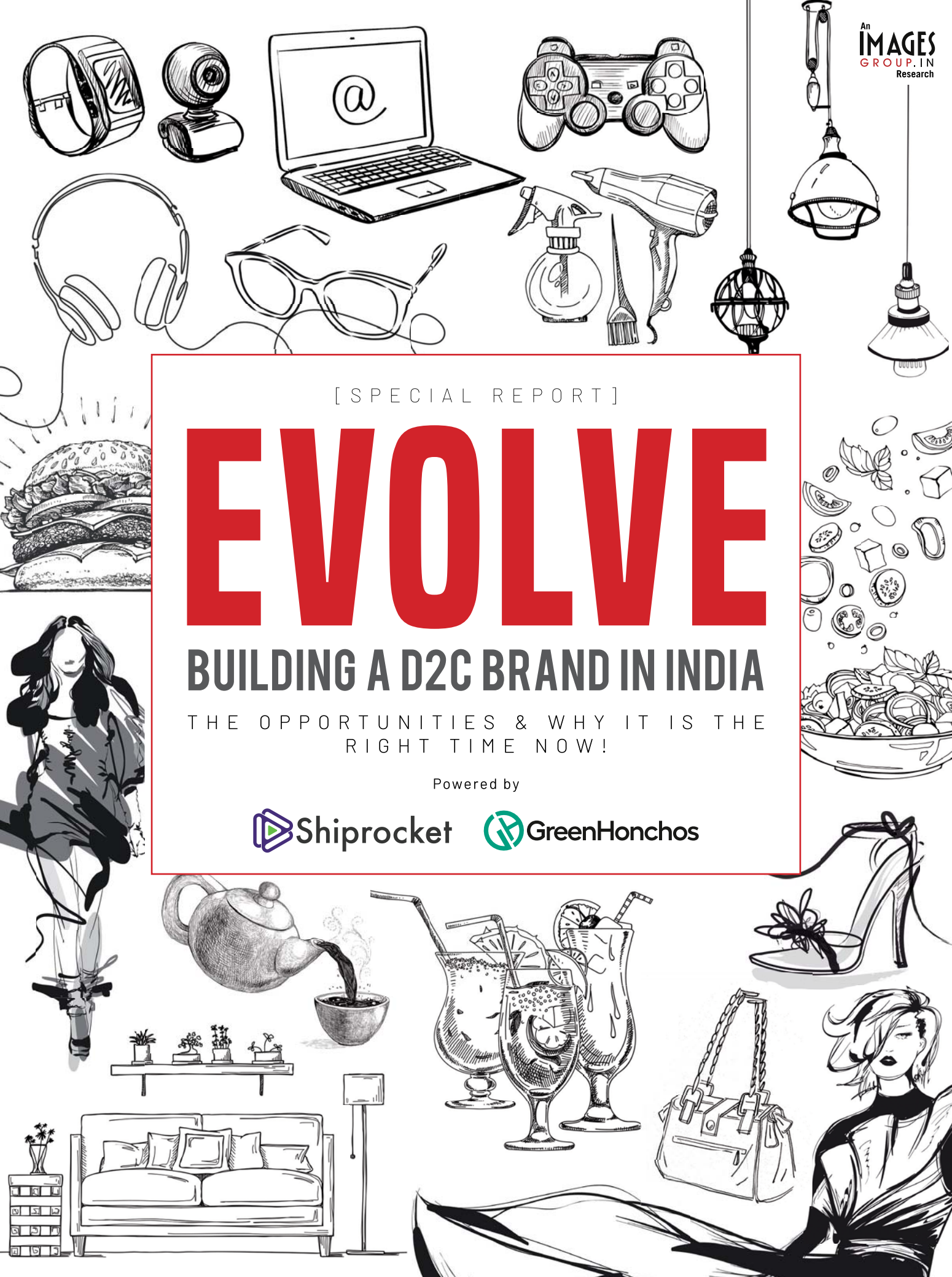
Shiprocket GreenHonchos



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COVER PRICE: ₹5000

FOREWORD

Over the past decade, we have seen a rise in the number of online businesses in India. Access to affordable internet and smartphones has been a watershed moment for online commerce. Many businesses have seized this opportunity to sell products online and serve customers across the country. This digital revolution has created a level playing field for many local businesses by giving them the opportunity to build a national presence over the internet.

At Shiprocket, we have been a pioneer of digital adoption and ecommerce enablement. Starting from providing a digital platform for logistics services, Shiprocket today is the largest customer experience platform in the country, providing fast and efficient logistics solutions to deliver customer delight with every parcel.

Today, Shiprocket has onboarded more than 1 lakh+ sellers, and it ships up to 2 lakhs+ shipments in a day. The platform enables the D2C brands to ship their products to 29,000+ pin codes in India and 220+ countries globally and helps them deliver shipments at the cheapest freight rates.

We believe that the D2C industry is ever-evolving, and it needs a range of technology-based solutions to reach its true potential. Therefore, with the intent to build a one-stop logistics and order fulfillment solution that will further strengthen the D2C ecosystem in India, Shiprocket has also added tech-enabled fulfillment centers and product packaging solutions to its portfolio.

Saahil Goel
Co-founder & CEO
Shiprocket

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Exploring Limitless Potential Way Beneath The Surface
As a leading full-stack D2C enabler, we help brands unlock their potential and exponentially grow their exclusive online channel with a Technology driven and Performance oriented approach towards operational ease & enhanced conversions.
Consulting | Technology | Marketing

Analytics | Marketplace | Branding
SCAN TO KNOW MORE

FOREWORD

The D2C Revolution is here and accelerated by over a decade due to the pandemic. eCommerce in India continues its growth by leaps and bounds. The question has shifted from how to attract consumers and delight them through their journey of purchase. Now the focus is on the lifetime value of a customer, profitability, and cracking the digital & consistent consumer growth - all fundamental tenets of growing a sustainable business and brand building.

The modern consumers have let slip their verdict - they prefer convenience and flexibility in purchasing, over traffic and parking fees to go to a mall or a store and browse. Although, to say that the modern Indian shopper has shifted completely to online shopping is misconstruing their behavioural patterns. Even though the pendulum has swung, it will come back and oscillate in between the new world order called "Digical".

Consumers pine after the look and feel of the product. They want the human touch that makes a big part of their decision making and the 'day out' entertainment that shopping provides. For online players, the bottom line then becomes to engage the customer through phygital empowerment and enablement. Emerging technologies and concepts like AR, VR and its larger set - Metaverse are working to enable just that.

Brands must provide an enhanced consumer experience. The modern Indian shopper does not just want to buy; they want to be engaged with a brand. In a truly Content to Commerce world, all D2C brands and aggregators that see tremendous growth are the ones who could communicate effectively with their customers and drive conversion by building a narrative - who they are, what they want and what do they solve!

Navin Joshua
Founder & Director
GreenHonchos

Supercharge Growth of Your D2C Store with Blaze by Bureau

The fastest checkout and ultimate RTO protection tool

Reduce RTO by **30%** by pre-empting RTO in real-time

Incentivise and increase prepaid transactions

Guaranteed **RTO protection** with hassle-free loss claims

70% faster checkout with customised COD enablement

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Lost and Damaged **Insurance**

We, and our customers alike, are loving the experience with Blaze checkout. In a very short period, there is **steep growth in GMV** owing to a **14%** increase in conversion rates. Blaze now **powers around 50% of all orders**. This is a testament to our customers preferring the new lean and slick buying flow. Also, **RTO intelligence and guarantee** have been a cherry on the cake. We can see the early signs of **reduction in RTOs**.

Drishti Singhal, EIR, Perfora

After introducing Blaze checkout for our customers, we saw an overall **increase in GMV by 21%** in just a month. We also noticed an **unbelievable 70% reduction** in checkout time. Here's a huge shout-out to the entire team at Bureau. I am supremely excited to see what they will come up with next. Count me in

Rohan Sonalkar, Founder, Native Tongue

Learn more:
www.bureau.id/blaze

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FOREWORD

IMAGES GROUP.IN

The direct-to-consumer (D2C) approach is picking up faster than we could ever comprehend and this ecosystem is undoubtedly a $100 billion opportunity today.

This D2C Report: Evolve is a step towards understanding the D2C ecosystem closely in order to understand the strongest pillars building the brand stories. From product innovation to business operations and customer-centricity, we try to decode every brand's journey through their market presence and how categorically they solved the challenges coming across to them with the right strategies in order to gain a bigger market share. It is now time to look closely at this sector to witness its 'emergence' story. And we aim to script this narrative through each participating brand, by decoding their journey within this universe.

While the digital-first approach of this segment is driving the sector ahead with speed, but still it was not easy and superlatively optimistic through and through. Sometimes, the pandemic was an issue, other times fulfillment may have caused immense hiccup for the brands. However, what interestingly came out through our conversation with the brands is that they did not only go by the trends to change their way of doing business, but decoded the real customer sentiments when it came to their brands and then paved the way to service them better. The heart to heart conversations helped us understand how plant-based food and beverages is emerging as a big sector now, piggybacking on the D2C landscape. This will soon emerge as a landmark category, courtesy the change in consumer behavior.

It was very heartwarming to see that innovation is not only about bringing to the market stellar products, but is also about filling in the need gap with something never done before. Seeing ideas translate into products and enriching product categories is very motivating, especially when you get to see unique products made of sustainable materials doing great business. This shows that demand for meaningful products is increasing and the consumer choices are evolving too.

Consumers, are clearly enjoying the momentum of this segment and contributing to its growth every step of the way. To further support this growth and accelerate the pace of every brand's ride ahead, the service providers and enablers are also bringing in innovative solutions & technologies. The overall sentiment is very positive and the D2C sector is fast galloping ahead to cease the opportunity of the market. This sector is perfecting its business stance every passing day and words fail when we try to summarize the exceptional growth registered by this segment over the last few years. Let's continue our efforts to shoulder in the big change and make the sector's growth shine bigger at every turn!

Amitabh Taneja
Chairman and Managing Director
IMAGES Group

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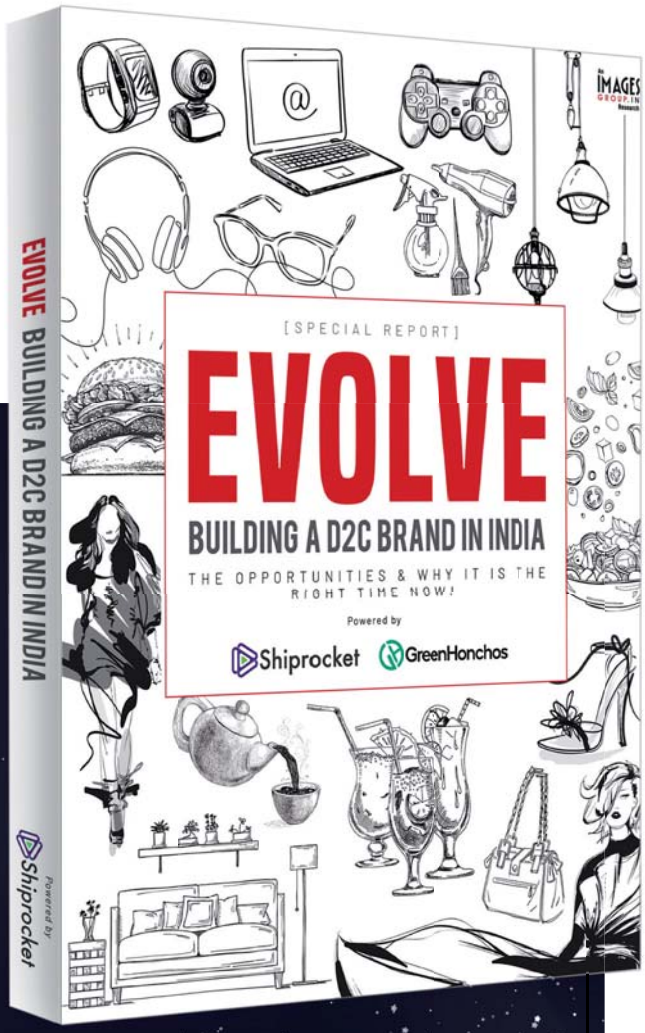

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A WORD ABOUT IMAGES

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Established in 1992, IMAGES Group is India's most prolific and influential disseminator of retail intelligence. Recognised by Indian and international retail communities through its B2B Magazines, Conferences, Exhibitions, Research Reports and Web Portals, the IMAGES Group is the largest retail intelligence organization in South Asia and the Middle East, whose multiple products and services function as catalysts for the profitable growth of modern retail through knowledge platform leadership. The Group's knowledge platforms include print and online reportage, research studies, and major annual business events with Conferences, Master-Classes and Workshops serving multiple verticals/segments/operations of retail. The mega industry events include: India Food Forum, India Fashion Forum and the Middle East Retail Forum.

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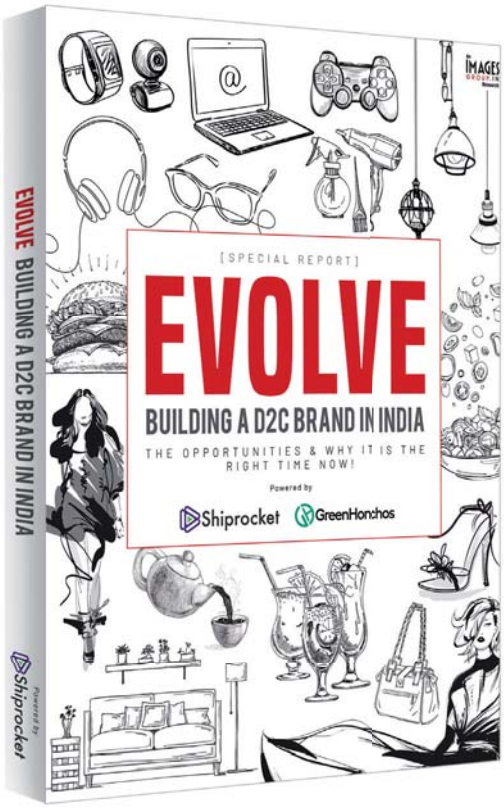

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INNOVATING TO CAPTURE THE MARKET

One of the strongest pillars of the D2C ecosystem is innovation. Products that meet the customer needs and perfectly fits into the need gap stands out and accelerates faster customer adaptation.

The direct-to-consumer companies are digital-native brands in most cases and they are known to manufacture and ship their products directly to buyers without relying on traditional stores or other middlemen. This allows the entire ecosystem and the companies to be more direct, disruptive, and agile as compared to traditional consumer brands. This also gives the brands an opportunity to maintain end-to-end control over the making, marketing, and distribution of products.

D2C is always ready

Unlike the traditional retail brands, D2C brands can experiment with everything, starting from innovating the products they are selling to innovating the distribution models to reach easily to their customers across touchpoints, to partnerships with physical retailers, to opening pop-up shops they can innovate and execute to stay closer to their customer.

Today, courtesy the evolution of this D2C ecosystem, a list of brands across categories have made their way into the market to sell products that retail could not imagine until a few years back. With innovation leading the way, we have healthy food and beverage, unique razors, ergonomic mattresses and what not making their way into the market.

Why product innovation?

Product innovation is important because it allows brands to create new spaces in a seemingly crowded market. By identifying the gaps in the market and weighing the ways to satisfy consumer needs in a way that is new and refreshing, brands can innovate new ways of offering something never done before to the consumer. It's also important to note that product innovation doesn't always involve the creation of a completely new product that addresses a completely new issue. But, can work in validating some new feature and as an improvement to an existing product.

Measuring innovation with returns

With an innovation in hand, brands need to analyse and measure the return on investment for the innovation. There are several metrics to measure innovation; some are less complicated as compared to the others. Commonly, businesses use sales and return on investment (ROI) metrics to measure the success of a new product. But, when you want to measure the innovation prior to the product launch, for instance, when you are still at the development phase of the product or you have a prototype ready, how can you be sure there is an audience for your new solution? And how can you prepare for a smooth product launch?

This is where Market research comes into play and gaining insights directly from the market helps you measure the merit of the product. Doing this right, works as a great advantage for the brand in the long-run and sets it course post the launch.

THE PILLARS OF PRODUCT INNOVATION

- Understanding through customer sentiments, whether the product offers something new or has a solution that traditional brands did not have.
- Analyzing to see if it adds value to the society at large. If it can be classified as environmentally friendly, toxin-free, organic, recyclable packaging etc.
- Building the brand story through innovation.
- Keeping a tab on the long-term implications of the innovations and how it can help give way to new sustainable developments in the long-run.

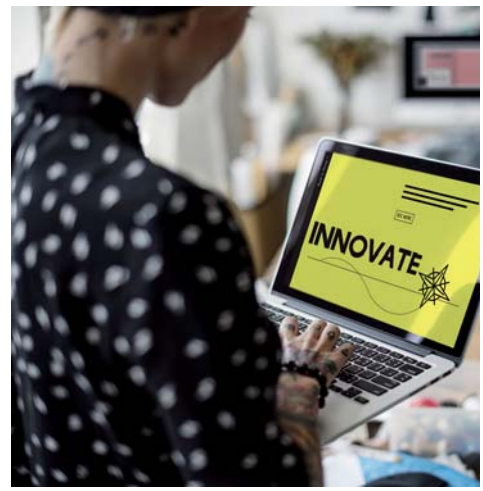
Innovation trends to watch out for

Growing demand for flavoured waters: Keeping in mind health concerns, consumers today are seeking fizz and taste, sans the artificial sweeteners and flavours. This is slowly pushing ahead new-age Indian brands to take the centre stage, who only use natural fruit flavours to offer the consumer something meaningful and tasty in a bottle.

With an innovation in hand, brands need to analyse and measure the return on investment for the innovation. There are several metrics to measure innovation; some are less complicated as compared to others.

Healthy food is shaking the market dynamics: D2C brands focus on millennials who are focused on health as well as taste and hence are introducing a wide variety of products such as flavoured milk, milkshakes and premium milk products. Alongside this, the packaged food brands are focused on preserving taste as well as nutrient content in ingredients through processes such as vacuum drying, advanced cold storage etc. Unlike the incumbents, D2C brands can add a variety of flavours in small production quantities to gauge consumer behaviour and then focus on the best perceived products. This opens up a new platform for growth for the brands.

Plant based nutrition is on demand now: From plant-based meat to plant based ice creams and plant-based alternatives to dairy, a lot of changes has been brought in within the product category of food to offer the customer a healthy alternative, which is easy on the pocket as well the palate. With the changing dietary preferences towards organic and vegan meals driving emergence of health & nutrition focused brands across categories including health supplements, protein bars, breakfast cereals and snacks, consumers are looking for faster deliveries of 'good food'.



What goes in the backend before a D2C Product innovation reaches the customer?

- It takes 8 months to 2 years for a brand to strategize, innovate and then put out the product for sale to the customer.
- It takes 100s of ideas in the bin to 1 good idea to bring in that product to the brainstorming board.
- Setting up of an agile R&D team of 3 to 4 people sets the podium for the development of the idea.
- Samples are tested at least 2 times or more, once by the internal team and then by external experts to get feedbacks.
- It is coming back to the drawing board to carry on the tweaks in order to fine-tune the product further.
- Product packaging is the next step and involves another round of brainstorming, testing, & finalization.
- The last step is planning distribution and activating the supply chain to make the fulfillment highly effective.

INNOVATIVE BRANDS, WHICH HAVE DISRUPTED THE MARKET

WHAT ARE THE PARAMETERS A BRAND WEIGHS TO MAKE INNOVATION A REALITY?

CUSTOMER INSIGHTS

MARKET NEED GAP UNDERSTANDING

GLOBAL TREND ANALYSIS

COMPETITION ANALYSIS

TRIVIA CORNER

- Bdiapers was a brand born to disrupt the non-innovative backbone of the diaper industry.
- FOReT® is a premium sustainable brand, which innovated cork and other sustainable fibers to bring in a unique accessory range for the customers.
- Only Earth caters to the huge gap in the vegan consumer market and innovates the plant-based milk option with its unique product range.
- Fabcurate innovates the idea of customization and brings to the customer an array of options when it comes to 'prints on fabric'.

HYGIENIC APPROACH

Bdiapers is India's only Hybrid diaper with chemical free disposable inserts. The product is a labour of love designed by Amrita Vaswani.

Bdiapers

HIGHLIGHTS

- The brand believes that there has not been any innovation in the diaper industry. Modern Cloth Diapers are cumbersome and most disposable diaper companies are not solution focused. As an answer to this the brand came up with their unique products.
- Most brands develop products that are bottom line driven and ignore the impact their business decisions have on not only the baby's health but each one of us. Bdiapers' goal is to give mothers the option to diaper without guilt and fear.
- Every mother knows what is best for their baby, and her own sanity. Whether it's the baby's health or the health of the planet, the role of Bdiapers is to empower mothers with the knowledge and products to help her in her parenting journey.
- The products by Bdiapers are solution based and designed to make parenting easy. Bdiapers believed in keeping the wisdom of past generations in innovative products that improve the health of our babies and our planet.

The idea of Bdiapers came to **Amrita Vaswani, Founder, Bdiapers** when she was diapering her own two babies. Her baby was prone to rashes and allergies and in her words "the price tags on organic diapers were mocking my frugality, and cloth diapers were too cumbersome for me as a working mom". Bdiapers is designed to keep the convenience of disposables and the health of cloth in the same product. Bdiapers is India's first Unique Hybrid cloth diapering Solution. A cloth diaper cover with a two-part detachable pouch system to ensure minimum washing and maximum protection; all the convenience of disposable nappy pads and, there's nothing cuter!

Product research

Raising the right product fit: Bdiapers is for those evolved mothers who are conscious of the environment and their babies health, and their own mental peace. "The process of designing was a tedious one as we tried to find the right materials, fabric and sizes to suit the Indian customer. Product is the main focus of our business and we spend a lot of time talking to our customers to understand their pain points and what is working for them. We have several new designs lined up to cater to different price points. Our product is accommodating to all diaper inserts and makes it easy for mothers to move between brands and use any insert they wish to (not microfiber) that can be used against the baby's skin. We have a unit that is constantly engaged in developing new designs and our goal is to mimic disposable diapers with our reusable offering hence we have a large inventory of taped, pant style diapers in the pipeline," Amrita mentions.

Each cloth diaper from Bdiapers comes with disposable nappy pads that provides rash-free comfort and leak proof protection like any other disposable diaper. These are made from plant cellulose and are free of nasty chemicals and dyes that make babies sick. A lot of research goes into making Bdiapers and the unique aspect of these diapers is their make. The diapers have a shell fabric that is cotton spandex and has a lot of 'give' for the active babies. The coated pouches are fully waterproof (but not plastic) and will not 'crack' like a regular plastic or polyester over several hundreds of washes. The brand uses only imported Velcro, sourced for its soft and non abrasive texture on the baby's soft skin. Each and every aspect of the diaper is carefully designed by an obsessive mom who always stresses on safety and comfort.

Bdiapers is affordable, healthy diapering. The shell covers are creative and simple and don't need a daily wash. Which means, you only need 1-2 till your baby has grown out of the size.

Go to market strategy

Community for strength: Bdiapers was marketed through blogger moms. The brand's first sales were through their Facebook group of cloth diapering mothers. "We then went on to have our own webstore and have been selling on all major

ecommerce platforms such as Amazon, Flipkart, Snapdeal and 16 others. Bdiapers was initially sold as 'functional fashion' clothing for babies under 2 years of age. The cloth covers come with matching T-shirts and chemical free disposable inserts making the entire diaper a part of baby's clothing, vs just an accessory," Amrita adds.

Born from a clear market need, the brand has from the start worked towards creating a fuss free approach that is affordable too. Amrita calls herself a troublemaker and wants to continue disrupting the market with her innovative approach.

Packaging innovation

Creating a difference: Bdiapers packaging is simple and eco-friendly and meant to keep prices low. They have pack sizes that are designed to serve 1 baby's diapering needs for at least a week. Their pack sizes are optimized to make them competitive in pricing as compared to other disposable diapers. Bdiapers is a unique diapering system that brings the best of cloth and disposable diapers in a single product. Bdiapers has a patented design of a diaper cover with a pouch system that holds the chemical free disposable inserts. The covers do not need a daily wash and the pouches are detachable making reusing the cover several times much easier. This system of cloth + disposables allows for the passage of air, reducing moisture and the growth of bacteria making the diaper completely rash free. With the option of using cloth or disposable inserts, Bdiapers allows for easy "diaper free" time. Bdiapers disposable nappy pads are bleach, fragrances and dye free making them hypoallergenic and gentle on the baby's sensitive skin. The diaper covers come in trim sizes ensuring a snug fit, leading to easy potty training.

> "BDIAPERS WAS INITIALLY SOLD AS FUNCTIONAL FASHION CLOTHING FOR BABIES UNDER 2 YEARS OF AGE. THE CLOTH COVERS COME WITH MATCHING T-SHIRTS AND CHEMICAL FREE DISPOSABLE INSERTS MAKING THE ENTIRE DIAPER A PART OF BABY S CLOTHING, VS JUST AN ACCESSORY.
>
> **–Amrita Vaswani**
> Founder, Bdiapers

STRONG BREW

Registering a 200% customer and revenue growth Chaika has revolutionised the instant tea space with flavours that set a different benchmark. The brand does not settle for less when it comes to innovation and continues to brew strongly with each new flavour.

CHAIKA

HIGHLIGHTS

- Chaika started with 2 hot teas: Bombay Cutting inspired by the cutting chai of Chowpatty Beach, Mumbai and then Kolkata Kadak, inspired by the share-market chai of their hometown Kolkata.
- Chaika has now expanded their product range from instant hot teas to instant iced-teas that are also 3-1 premixes dissolving in cold water. With convenience becoming more and more important they see a huge potential for growth.
- The brand stands out for its quirky, colourful packaging, which they have intentionally used to disrupt the category.
- The brand's USP is that they cater to the regional preferences of masala chai in India.
- The brand has tested their product with over 10,000 customers, over 25 corporate offices, and got accepted by clubs such as The Royal Calcutta Golf Club and hotels such as Hyatt Regency Kolkata.

Chaika is a sentiment, it stands for the whole universe of emotion and tradition related to 'chai'. The Founders of Chaika believe that the instant tea category is the next step in the evolution of tea, making tea convenient. With this thought in mind, they have made tea cool, convenient and accessible. Chaika is known for their premix collections, which makes brewing a cup of tea just like your 'ghar ka chai' a stirringly quick endevour!

Product research

Creating a new niche: "The idea for chaika started when we were working in Singapore. We craved masala chai but didn't know how to make it. Even when we tried, we failed! Moreover, the process took 15-20 minutes - we just didn't have the time in the morning! This thought made us leave our finance jobs to take the entrepreneurship route," **Devanshi Chitlangia, Co-Founder, Chaika** comments. Devanshi and Aradhita are part of families that have been in the tea business for over 70 years and they have both worked there to get first-hand experience of the industry. Aradhita is also a certified Tea Taster.

Devanshi continues, "filling the gap between the customer expectations and the product might be challenging. For us at Chaika, we spent hours understanding customer tastes and preferences to come up with the perfect blend. Thus, we realized that tea is a sentiment, it has a special place in our hearts. Instead of 1 masala tea premix (like other brands) we have incorporated regional tastes and have 6 varieties! Through our flavors we hope to transport our clientele to that moment of nostalgia of their childhood that they cherish. Innovating in a competitive environment is always tough but has its rewards".

Go to market strategy

Developing a strategy for roll-out: Coming from tea families, product development was an advantage. The duo were able to take advantage of resources to get connected to suppliers. Even when preparing the blends they got in touch with multiple professional tea tasters and experts who assisted them with the blends. As of now they are looking to expand the presence of the existing SKUs they have, but are always keen to understand more about the market. Before every season they spend a couple of weeks on product development for seasonal undertakings!

"After multiple rounds of innovation, product testing and bling tasting we finally had the blends ready. The challenge we faced was that we did not come from branding backgrounds and most designers gave us boring stereotypical packaging designs. Ideating on brand appeal and tone, we created the packaging of Chaika inhouse! Moreover, being a startup we looked at cost-effective strategies to market the product. We started with wedding planners and gifting companies, and gave the product at a reduced rate. This helped us gain brand recognition, and got multiple people to sample the product without having to burn cash," **Aradhita Agarwal, Co-Founder, Chaika** highlights.

> CHAIKA'S PACKAGING STANDS AS ITS USP. THROUGH OUR PACKAGING WE ARE ABLE TO APPEAL TO BOTH THE YOUTH AND OLDER GENERATIONS. WE BRING OUT THE INDIANNESS, THE ESSENCE OF MASALA CHAI AND TRANSPORT YOU TO YOUR HOME TOWN.
>
> **–Devanshi Chitlangia**
> Co-Founder, Chaika

> WE REALISED THAT PEOPLE WERE SWITCHING OVER, FROM MASALA CHAI, THE BEVERAGE THEY GREW UP WITH, TO GREEN TEA OR COFFEE, MERELY FOR THE SAKE OF CONVENIENCE! THIS IS WHAT MADE US WANT TO LAUNCH MASALA TEAS IN A MORE CONVENIENT FORMAT!
>
> **–Aradhita Agarwal**
> Co-Founder, Chaika

Aradhita adds, "We realised that people were switching over, from masala chai, the beverage they grew up with, to green tea or coffee, merely for the sake of convenience! This is what made us want to launch masala teas in a more convenient format! There were times when we faced challenges but we innovated, stayed put and continued pushing the brand. When COVID-19 hit us, it was initially very hard as a bulk of our sales were from wedding planners, travelers, hotels and clubs. Being a startup it was difficult to sustain our fixed expenses while in lockdown. We held on, we pivoted, we started marketing ourselves as the perfect COVID solution, and got the essential service tag".

Packaging innovation

Unique stance: "Chaika's packaging stands as its USP. Through our packaging we are able to appeal to both the youth and older generations. We bring out the Indianness, the essence of masala chai and transport you to your home town. Thus, if you look at our flavor packaging, for Bombay Cutting you shall see Chowpatty beach with historical Bombay elements and so on. Our packaging is disruptive and unique as it truly brings out the Make in India essence. Most tea brands are moving towards monotones and simplicity, but with our packaging we combine old-school elements with modern designs," Devanshi narrates. "While the instant tea category exists, we would like to innovate further here and disrupt the market through our flavors, strategy and branding," she further adds.

CHANGE FOR GOOD

Founded by IIT Kharagpur alumni, Eggoz was started with a passion to help farmers of rural North India to improve their yield and income.The farmers for the brand are onboarded to a streamlined program where they receive technical and veterinarian advisory support with IOT devices to boost their yield. They provide nutritionally balanced, pure veg and herbal feed for healthier birds. The brand's proprietary and unique technology is an integral part of farmer operations.

EGGOZ NUTRITION

HIGHLIGHTS

- Penetration of packaged egg products in India is less than 3% of total eggs consumed. So, the priority right now for Eggoz is to improve availability of quality packaged eggs to the consumers. For that the brand adopted a packaging design, which is functional and speaks to the consumers.
- Eggoz calls themselves the disruptors of the egg space in India. They are building a category that is very tiny today and didn't exist until a few years ago. They believe consumers should find quality nutrition and they won't get it with the present state of eggs available.
- The brand focuses on a consumer-centric and freshness-focused approach along with innovative strategies.
- Recently, the company bagged a funding of around $3.5 million led by Nabaventures and also participated in many funding rounds.

At Eggoz, the consumer is the king for the brand and all the brand's operations and approaches are to ensure consumer delight. Today, in India, an egg available in the market is 7-10 days old with low nutritional values and high salmonella bacteria risks. This pushed Eggoz to completely reinvent the supply chain to ascertain that eggs reach retail counters within 24 hours of laying and then with reverse supply chain, the brand reconfirms that no Eggoz product gets older than 4-5 days on shelves. Even though their eggs have a shelf life of 21 days, the brand replenishes stock every 4 days to offer the best experience to consumers.

Product research

Funds for growth: Last month, the company bagged a funding of around $3.5 million led by Nabaventures and also participated in many funding rounds. **Abhishek Negi, Founder, Eggoz** told us how the company is utilizing it, he said "With the recent funding we have raised, we are mostly utilizing it to scale our presence across the country. Right now, Eggoz is the number one brand of North India and is limited to Delhi NCR up and in the east side of India. With the recent funding, we are opening our markets in Chandigarh Jaipur as well. So now we are launching to go in all the major hubs of the country, which starts with Bangalore and we have opened stores there last month, and now aiming to scale in metro towns as well. With this funding, we're building the right set of team."

Negi also told us about the fund raising journey, "Fundraising journey was never easy for us. Eggoz was founded in 2017 and for the initial two, three years of our business, we were not a brand. Since the beginning there were a lot of challenges in terms of understanding the business, how eggs can become a branded discovery in India. There are many investors who said that this company will not scale, and sustaining and building a big business would be tough. But the perseverance at the end of the day has helped us, and passed us through all the challenges. We've got touch with the right set of investors who are there with us, including our angel investors."

"We are a team of IIT alumni, but none of us are from poultry background. When we started in 2017, we hit a roadblock when we realized that egg farming is a very technical and ops intensive business. So, we decided to start farming ourselves and learn the business from ground level. That being said, research and innovation is a very key part of our company culture and we work with the sharpest of minds to develop products that can delight our consumers and boost the nutrition index of our country," Negi mentions.

Go to market strategy

Keeping true to the source: The quality spoke for itself, the team mentions. With the virtue of herbal feed for hen and supply chain focused on freshness, the

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>
> **–Abhishek Negi**
> Founder, Eggoz

end-delivered product is of much better quality and it gets reflected in the taste and the feel. With immense consumer love and word of mouth publicity, Eggoz has become the leading brand of India within 15 months of launch. Recently, they have started to advertise their brand to increase awareness and their reach.

D2C marketplace is not just about customization, but it also is about innovation, faster deliveries and timeliness delivery. Negi told us about the challenges that the brand is facing in this perspective, "For us there are two parts of logistics, as it is for the F&B companies. The first part focuses on pickups and collection from farmers and bringing it to the processing centers. The second part focuses on last mile delivery to deliver processed eggs and packed it so that it can go back to your nearby Kirana to modern trade warehouses to online general warehouses and so on and so forth. So the first mile of the entire business model that we have developed and supply chain structure is centered around freshness that's to deliver the freshest possible eggs to the consumer. Because right now what we're doing at every consumption hub is that we source and procure eggs from farmer partners which are located in the vicinity. So we don't need to go 250 to 300 kilometers from a consumption hub. The idea is very straightforward that we have to ensure freshness for consumers because fresh eggs retain the nutrition in them so that every egg which has been consumed by consumers out there, must be bioavailable nutritious."

Packaging innovation

Trendy & balanced: Eggoz packaging is functional in nature along with minimalistic yet attractive design, they have blended functional aspects to it which keeps the supply chain losses to a minimum. They are offering Eggoz products in SKUs of 6, 10, 25 and 30 eggs, which are sturdy, protective and easy to carry. "Our polka dotted packaging theme is centered on vitality. The dark yellow colour signifies bright sunny mornings that are full of energy, whereas the polka dots signify standardization of products as all the dots are of same size just like our eggs where all Eggoz eggs are uniform and standardized," Negi states.

CURATION OF STYLE

Fabcurate, facilitates the designer within us to help create anything of our imagination using an array of premium quality fabrics curated specially keeping every consumer and their unique needs in mind.

FABCURATE
CURATE YOUR OWN FABRIC

HIGHLIGHTS

- The brand offers top-notch customization. A customer can select the kind of design they desire on the fabrics and can send them to Fabcurate and they imprint them.
- The process of customization was complex at the starting, but it led Fabcurate in a good direction as they were overwhelmed with the response from the customers.
- The inbuilt printing house for the brand has been their main pillar of strength. Overall, it was the process that helped them become what Fabcurate is today, strong and appreciated by their customers. It's ongoing work moves on with the trend.
- The brand pays a lot of attention to the community they belong to and the Indian Handloom Industry is their main focus point. Working with the weavers and empowering them is a big part of the work the brand does.

Fabcurate was established to bridge the gap between people and fashion. To understand the perspectives of customers and to give them the kind of product they require is a thriving motive for the brand. These fabrics are sourced directly from traditional fabric merchants who are the masters of traditional craft. Sometimes the fabric dictates the sort of garment you can make and at Fabcurate, you will notice that happening with you quite a lot!

To top it all, the brand is based out of Surat, Gujarat which is the textile capital of the country. The best yarn production, weaving, processing and even embroidery happens in Surat. Always adaptive to the changes in the latest trends, the city has never failed to respond to the changing preferences of people.

Product research

Disrupting the market: Product research is crucial for the brand as it dictates the direction they are going, as a company. "Our designer team works on it continuously and it is time-consuming. For example, the designer selects the design, and the same is applied by the tailor on the fabric, till then all the other processes are stopped. This ceases production for some time. And if there are changes, then the same process is repeated again. Hence, it requires a lot of attention and a skilled person to take care of it. Surfing through various websites and social media to know about the fashion trends going on also consumes a significant amount of time. It halts the other manufacturing processes and this sometimes causes complexity. Resources are all already in-house so the worry is less there. Our funds are being used specifically to grow the company and take it to a next level," informs **Sanjay Desai, Director, Fabcurate.**

Since the start the research team at the brand's end has analyzed the current market demands and the new style and trends that were globally creating ripples. They had a quick response time and also were in connection with their vendors to roll out unique fabrics to the market.

Go to market strategy

Marketing it right: Fabcurate has been marketing via various sources such as e-mail and social media. Strategies were focused on widening the brand's reach not only in India but also globally. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIN are some of the applications that the brand advertises their products on and this has helped them immensely. The world is at our fingertips. Everyone is attached to their smartphones and what better way to reach them than digital marketing. They have always kept up with innovation and trends, their marketing team takes care of the latest fashion trends going on and the kind of product people are more attracted to. Once they know the audience the advertising becomes easy. People nowadays are more concerned about sustainability and they are selective about the kind of fabrics they wear and we deliver the exact same. "Customization

> “OUR COMPANY IS VERSATILE AS WE KEEP THE PREFERENCE OF OUR CUSTOMERS FIRST. FASHION IS ABOUT FREEDOM AND THIS IS WHAT WE BELIEVE IN. ONE SHOULD NOT HOLD ON TO HIS/HER THOUGHTS ON STYLE. OUR CUSTOMER CARE TEAM HELPS CUSTOMERS IN SELECTING THE BEST FABRICS AND SIZES SUITABLE FOR THEM.
>
> **–Sanjay Desai**
> Director, Fabcurate

is one of the key factors to bring in more customers, as it lets anyone be a fashion designer and creative. With time, we have had to change our planning and deploy new ways of getting a good customer base,” Sanjay adds.

Packaging innovation

Unique and different: Packaging of the fabrics is done in a fabric bag. The brand’s logo is at the center of the bag and it catches the eye. The bag isn’t that fancy but sober. It is eco-friendly and is firm to hold a good weight of the fabric. It is a multi-purpose bag that can be used to carry other things too. It is made in a way that one can easily recognize the company just by having a quick glance at it. Receiving fabrics in a fabric bag is quite a unique concept.

“Our company is versatile as we keep the preference of our customers first. Fashion is about freedom and this is what we believe in. One should not hold on to his/her thoughts on style. Our customer care team helps customers in selecting the best fabrics and sizes suitable for them. The creative team works to display the fabrics artistically and in a way that makes an impact. Our website is loaded with numerous designs and we keep on updating them every now and then. The goal is to make a brand name that is on everyone’s mind when they hear the word fabrics,” Sanjay highlights.

Fabcurate would love to be called an Innovator as they have improvised on a lot of things. They are trying to build a transparent system in the fabric business. Customization, a wide bouquet of designs that can be customised further, listening to customers, analyzing market trends, and studying what competitors are doing in order to spot opportunities are some of the brand’s strengths. When they scrutinize the results and applications of other companies, they save a lot of time and cost. Sanjay mentions that the workplace is an empowering space for employees. They anticipate the market changes in order to get ahead of opportunities. Further, Snajay mentions that the operational efficiency for the company has increased a lot with more experienced employees. Customers are identifying their potential and product improvements.

SKIN FRIENDLY

Fixderma's cosmetics offers every user scientifically proven skin improvement. The goal of healthy skin accompanied by an enhanced skincare routine.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Fixderma stands for dermatologist certified, uniquely formulated skincare solutions.
- The brand dffers exclusive range of skin solutions for the mentioned categories: Anti aging, Acne care, Hyperpigmentation, Chemical exfoliation, hair fall treatment, dandruff and scalp infections, sun protection.
- High quality airless packaging is their USP, to keep the product safe till the last drop.
- The products are safe for all skin types, non-irritating, non-comedogenic,free from paraben, synthetic perfumes, sulfates and alcohol.

Physicians and skincare professionals define cosmeceuticals as products on the cutting-edge between cosmetics and pharmaceuticals. Active ingredients in cosmeceuticals are expected to be clinically proven to enhance skincare efficacy. At Fixderma, the products provide scientifically proven skin improvement crafted in elegant formulations at the company's state of the art ISO 22716:2007 GMP CERTIFIED manufacturing unit spread over 55000 square feet in Neemrana, Rajasthan, India.

With more than 175 formulations designed to improve skin health and repair conditions, Fixderma has been going strong since its inception. To accelerate the growth and keep up with the evolving technological advancements, a regular periodical and online in-house training is dedicated for the technical staff, so that they can use validated methods and procedures perfectly, producing perfect and cost-effective final products.

Product research

Research backbone: At Fixderma, the brand's mission is to make every skin healthy. They are a committed skincare company in terms of research and innovation, and the brand promises to provide advanced skincare backed by science. They try to fix all your skincare woes from acne, dry/Oily/Combination skin care conditions, sun protection. The brand's skincare philosophy centers on three main pillars: PREVENT. PROTECT. CORRECT. These principles work synergistically to provide the healthiest skin possible, and optimal anti-aging results.

Working alongside healthcare professionals, dermatologists, Laser clinics, the products are designed to preserve healthy skin and provide tailored responses suited to every dysfunction. Reactive skin, dry to atopic skin, acne-prone skin. The brand helps all skin types to strengthen themselves, whatever their sensitivity or environment. Designed to be practical and easy to use, the products take care of your skin and support it each day, for visible, lasting efficacy without compromising on respect for your skin.

The customers today are very informed, conscious and decisive. But the skincare market is flooded with products and propositions, which can end up confusing even the most certain customer. Product innovation in such a scenario, is very challenging. Because there is a very thin line between innovation and replication. Being a Dermaceutic expert brand, innovation was easy to achieve for Fixderma but difficult to curate. It's extremely critical to make a potential customer understand what they lack in their skincare and how the right formulation makes a difference.

Go to market strategy

Thinking science first: "All our products are carefully formulated and tested. Like

> ALL OUR PRODUCTS ARE CAREFULLY FORMULATED AND TESTED. LIKE WE ALWAYS SAY, THEY ARE BACKED BY SCIENCE. HENCE, ALL OUR INNOVATIONS ARE BACKED BY EXPERTS. WE UNDERSTAND THE VALUE AND IMPACT OF RIGHT FORMULATION.
>
> **–Shaily Mehrotra**
> CEO & Founder, Fixderma Group

we always say, they are backed by science. Hence, all our innovations are backed by experts. We understand the value and impact of right formulation. Hence, our strategy was to market our formulation not our product. We don't promote beauty. We aim to deliver healthy, problem free skin," **Shaily Mehrotra, CEO & Founder, Fixderma Group** mentions.

During their initial years, the brand reached out to the right customer through the right primary channel; Dermatologists. Their USP is that they are not only dermatologist recommended, but also certified. The brand has further expanded its marketing channels to D2C platforms mainly e-commerce channels like Brand website, Amazon, Flipkart, Netmeds, Pharmeasy, Vanity wagon, Tatacliq. The brand recently also went OTC with specific products mainly in the category of Acne care and everyday skincare. Additionally, as a part of their product marketing strategy, the brand has widened its reach to the end customers through the social media pillars; influencers, bloggers, targeted ads and content marketing. Currently exporting to more than 35 countries, the Fixderma line of skincare speaks of transformation products to nourish and fall in love with your skin at every step of the skincare journey.

Packaging innovation

Attractive packaging: "Packaging plays a crucial role in terms of preserving the quality, colour and efficacy of products; especially serums. All our products and formulations are temperature tested. We ensure they stay unaffected and unoxidized in all weather conditions. The photosensitive formulations like Vitamin C, Hyaluronic acid etc come in airless pumps to ensure the product stays safe to use till the last drop," she adds.

The brand is already proud to be innovators in the field of dermaceutic skincare. They are the only ones in the market to come up with peeling pads. "Our Pentapeel pad exhibits a combination of 5 powerful actives to ensure youthful, even and melasma free skin. Our C scape serum, which is a 25% highly concentrated Vitamin C serum is the only serum of that strength in the market. So, is our HA4 hyaluronic acid serum. There are many Hyaluronic acid serums in the market, but only ours come in 4 different molecule sizes," Shaily elaborates by giving some first-hand product insights, which they bring out for their customers.

IMPACTFUL ACCESSORIES

FOReT's mission is to showcase the inherent beauty of eco-friendly materials through exceptional craftsmanship and sophisticated designs that are suited for our modern lifestyle.

FOReT®
Fashion meets Sustainability

HIGHLIGHTS

- First Brand in India to launch Plant based Cork Jewellery and Cork Handbags.
- PETA Approved Vegan Brand.
- In 2020, Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) awarded FOReT the Industry Design Leadership Award for design led innovation that impacts industry practices.
- As a sustainable brand, FOReT, continuously researches about materials and process to stay sustainable and be innovative in order to make eco-friendly products mainstream

Fashion is one of the top five polluters on the planet, with synthetic materials, poor working conditions for craftsmen, low-cost production, and waste that cannot be recycled or repurposed, all contributing to the problem.

FOReT was founded in 2019 with the goal of creating fashion products that are made with environmentally friendly materials and techniques. "Our approach is to reimagine natural materials and give them a new identity in a way that it is appealing to the customer as a fashion product and can be worn for any occasion. We continuously educate and make consumers aware of the new age materials and the need for conscious fashion.," states Supriya S, the Founder of FOReT.

Their collection includes jewellery, handbags, wallets and belts for women, men and children.

Product research

Identifying the need gap: The inspiration for FOReT came from the founder, Supriya's, personal experience where she found limited options in sustainable fashion accessories that could complement her corporate and daily lifestyle.

While consumers began to make more conscious choices in food, clothing, and personal care goods, the fashion accessories market remained relatively untouched.

Supriya researched on natural materials that could replace animal and synthetic materials while maintaining the same aesthetic appeal, feel and durability. After extensive evaluation, she identified Cork as a potential material to create the accessories. Cork is now a popular material in their products.

Supriya highlights, "When I decided to launch FOReT, I researched further about the fabric and the various kinds of standards available in Cork. I also personally traveled and met the manufacturers in Europe where the Cork Trees originate to understand the quality and various standards and specifications available in Cork".

Cork is made from the bark of Cork Oak Trees and is a naturally renewable material. It is durable, antimicrobial, hypoallergenic, and water-resistant.

The brand is constantly researching new materials and procedures to see how it can lessen its environmental impact. She continues, "There is a continuous dialogue within our team, with our manufacturers and vendors on materials, improving our practices to make them more sustainable and reduce wastage."

Banana Fibre is used in their most recent collection of handbags. "Our new collection incorporates a variety of crafts and materials such as banana fibre, tamarind seeds, cork, and traditional Ilkal handloom cotton to produce stylish and functional handbags that can be used for any occasion," Supriya further adds.

Challenge at stake: Sustainability is a lifestyle and most consumers fear that they may need to radically change to adopt

> AT FORET, OUR PRODUCTS ARE DESIGNED WITH A LOT OF THOUGHT AND FINE CRAFTSMANSHIP SUCH THAT ALTHOUGH MADE FROM PLANT BASED MATERIALS, THEY CAN EASILY FIT INTO YOUR LIFESTYLE AND CAN BE ADAPTED FOR ANY OCCASION.
>
> **– SUPRIYA S**
> FOUNDER & CREATIVE DIRECTOR, FORET®

eco-friendly products. Moreover, with environmentally products, the myth is that they may not be able to make a fashion statement or they may not be durable or the finish is too raw.

The brand continuously educates customers on the materials and their strength. By developing a good design that elevates the look and the strength of natural fabrics, they are able to garner customer's affinity and convert it into a frequent purchase. They work with artisans who are experts in their field to manufacture the products and this helps them create the elegant and sophisticated products they are known for.

Go to market strategy

Creating the market for growth: While the brand was in beta launch phase, they participated in a Vegan Fest. The event's audience was ideal for putting their products to the test. By evening, they were sold out and this further validated their product, the branding and pricing. By engaging directly with the customers, they were able to identify the categories and strengthen their marketing communication. The brand was officially launched a couple of months later and customers from the event continue to be to be the frequent buyers. They were featured in most top fashion magazines in India within a few months of its inception.

Packaging innovation

Developing the innovation: FOReT packaging is very minimal allowing their product to take centre stage. Their products are packed in a reusable Cotton drawstring bag, while the information booklet is made from recycled paper. Customers have frequently expressed satisfaction with their jewellery packing, which is elegantly wrapped in Cotton sheets.

Innovator or Disruptor: Can you say eco-friendly and stylish in the same breath? With FOReT you can.

FOReT would love to be referred both as an innovator and a disruptor. As an innovator, they continuously research and bring forward products that can bridge the gap to make eco-friendly practices and materials accessible to a discerning fashion conscious customer. As a disruptor, they are breaking established markets with their fashion products that are Stylish while being Handcrafted, Vegan, Earth friendly and made from new age plant based materials.

HEALTH IN A SCOOP

A simple kitchen experiment turned into a super healthy ice cream brand! That's how Get-A-Whey was born.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The brand was launched from a kitchen in 2018.
- In July 2020, Get-A-Whey launched India's first ice cream website delivering to your doorstep.
- 2019 June, the brand entered offline retail and was present in Nature's Basket all aross India.
- In Jan 22, Get-A-Whey aired on Shark Tank India and bagged an INR 1 Crore investment .

The Founders absolutely love eating dessert. On the other hand, they are also fitness freaks and are very conscious of what they eat. Desserts available in the market are typically packed with high fat and a lot of sugar. It all started one day when the Founder duo asked their mother to whip them a healthier option to satiate their post-workout cravings. Since their mother has always made the best food for them, she got onto it in a jiffy. It was on the very first bite, the three of them decided that this ice cream had to be shared with the world. They wanted everyone to have the same guilt-free experience that they shared in their kitchen that day.

At Get-A-Whey, they make ice creams that are healthy yet outrageously tasty. They are packed with whey protein and no added sugar, whatsoever. Get-A-Whey is currently present in Mumbai, Pune, Bangalore, Chennai, Delhi NCR, Surat, Jaipur and Ahmedabad. In just over two years, what started as a kitchen experiment in the Founder's house has now turned into India's first healthy ice cream brand.

Product research

Innovating it for health: **Jash Shah, Founder, Get-A-Whey** when talking about the inception story of the brand mentions, "To be honest it was a leap of faith for me as India had never seen a healthy ice cream category before Get-A-Whey was born. So it was very difficult to ascertain the demand and whether or not it is scalable. The process involves a lot of research, focused group tasting and test marketing".

The making of the ice cream involves a very tedious and innovative process. It's a very extensive process where the brand does multiple sensory tests for taste, smell, look and feel for every batch made, for them it didn't stop here - if a batch was okay for all of the above parameters it was then sent for lab tests and the team did have a check to ensure that the nutrition information stayed in range. Jash spent 6 hours every week with their food technologist and NPD experts to perfect the recipe of every ice cream.

Rolling it out to the market

The roadmap: "We thought gyms would be the ideal place to start our retailing journey and so we started doing tasting and sampling in top gyms in mumbai. Little did we know that we were soon going to change our proposition from protein ice cream to healthy ice cream. We realized

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>
> **–Jash Shah**
> Founder, Get-A-Whey

there were a higher number of customers looking for sugar free/diabetic friendly and ketogenic options so we then started selling through supermarkets and retail chains," he mentions.

"We definitely want to be known as innovators. The goal is and always will be to innovate the desserts & sweets space. There are so many categories that still lack innovation. I just want people to enjoy what they love the most in a guilt-free way. Imagine a world without any guilt," he adds. Recently, the brand even managed to bag a deal on Shark Tank India, worth ₹1 crore, for a 15 percent equity and roped in three sharks—Aman Gupta, co-founder and CMO of boAt, Ashneer Grover, founder and MD, Bharatpe, and Vineeta Singh, CEO of Sugar Cosmetics.

Packaging innovation

Right choice: "When you're in the consumer packaged goods business the most important thing is your packaging. During and after the launch I knew we needed to have the best packaging but that needed a significant amount of spending which we didn't have budgets for earlier. But after the first 8 months of business we decided to start working on better Packaging. We spent a lot of time (almost 6 months) rolling out our current packaging - we knew our brand identity was that of a cool person - funny, smart and helpful. So we had to keep in mind a similar colour palette selection along with transparent and clean label design to communicate exactly what the tub contains on the tub itself," Jash informs.

The brand colours are unique in itself and very attractive and easy to spot while sitting on a shelf with other brands like Baskin Robbins, London Diary and Haagen Dazs. They have tried to disrupt the space by having protein content as a call out on the front of the pack and mentioning the carbohydrate content while keeping the look and feel premium. They also mentions their actual story on the back of the pack of how a mom and 2 engineer kids brought a healthy ice cream brand to India. These things set them apart.

SWEET SPOT

Kandee Factory is at the forefront of sustainable manufacturing practices and is proud to be one of the only manufacturers world-wide that harnesses the power of atmospheric air water extraction technology in order to make environmentally friendly candies and confections.

KANDEE FACTORY®
New-Age Health & Earth Mindful, Yummy Vegan Confections

HIGHLIGHTS

- 100% of the brand's production is managed and powered by women.
- Kandee Factory has seen a 100% y-o-y revenue growth. The brand touched Rs.2.5 Crores in FY 20-21.
- The brand is retailing across prominent marketplaces like Amazon India , Amazon Germany , Amazon UK , Flipkart, Bigbasket, Swiggy Instacart , Ola foods
- Moving quickly into the international markets has also helped the brand create buzz around its products in India and this also gave them an opportunity to try new markets and assess large outcomes in the brand's business models at a global scale.

On the one hand the brand boasts of sustainable techniques, which helps it bring in healthy and innovative concepts to the market. On the other hand, they work together with local farmers to repurpose their biomass by extracting pigments, which Kandee Factory uses to make their all-natural colours. Kandee Factory appeals to the conscious consumer who takes responsible consumption seriously.

Product research

Innovation for every age: "Meaningful Innovation is the life blood for sustained growth and viability for any business and more so for a startup. More than easy or difficult, it should be an enjoyable pursuit In itself. All our class leading innovations have been a culmination of filling a need, knowledge of the process, unafraid to make mistakes, insights in consumer needs and potential for scalability," **Mahesh Dharam, Founder, Kandee Factory** mentions.

The Innovation for the brand is mostly done keeping in mind product market fit and once the product is ready, branding & packaging is done keeping in mind product differentiation at the market place and channel of distribution. All their products need to fit into a phygital distribution strategy, keeping in mind the global audience. Kandee Factory is at the forefront of plant-based confectionery product manufacturing and creating a new category of confectionery products at the marketplace. Kandee Factory is an Innovator of meaningful plant based confectionery products with great product market fit and product distribution channel fit. Some oftheir portfolio of products are disruptive innovations viz Marshmelts Marshmallow, Ville nour Chocomallow, Orileys gummy candy and DouxBon Mallow Pops.

Go to market strategy

Building the right base: The brand constantly innovate, brand, commercialise and launch /market using D2C marketplace channels, physical store, and modern trade channels. "Phygital strategy works well for us as it is a mix of D2C and Modern Trade. Our products being in the Impulse Food Snacking Product category, did well during the pandemic. In Particular, our D2C business grew rapidly. We increased our assortment of products, introduced combo assortments and Fun DIY Dessert Kits, which further engaged the consumer towards our brand," **Anusha Mahesh Dharam, Co-Founder, Kandee Factory** mentions.

Customer feedback is constantly taken and the brand keeps a keen eye out for unmet needs and white space opportunities in the marketplace. Their R&D, pilot production & commercialization cycles are capital efficient and fast.

Packaging innovation

Wrapping it right: "Our Target market is the aspirational/mid market segment and above the mass market segment. Packaging is done using easily available packing formats with no large investments

> MEANINGFUL INNOVATION IS THE LIFE BLOOD FOR SUSTAINED GROWTH AND VIABILITY FOR ANY BUSINESS AND MORE SO FOR A STARTUP.

–Mahesh Dharam
Founder, Kandee Factory

> WE INCREASED OUR ASSORTMENT OF PRODUCTS, INTRODUCED COMBO ASSORTMENTS AND FUN DIY DESSERT KITS, WHICH FURTHER ENGAGED THE CONSUMER TOWARDS OUR BRAND.

–Anusha Mahesh Dharam
Co-Founder, Kandee Factory

done, however branding and label contents are designed and executed for a global audience. We have achieved a certain product/market fitment in the Indian context and would like to penetrate deeper using technology for distribution. Global expansion using capital efficient e-market places is also a focus area for us and we are associated with the Amazon Launchpad Program for EU and our products have scored well in the initial pilot phase of launch and we look forward to expanding our presence first in the EU region and then to US and Canada," Anusha adds.

Tightening the market proliferation:

Mahesh says that the team works with a certain global outlook and that he says is working in favour of the brand. He further adds, "Kandee Factory being in the impulse food snacking category, the time to customer's mouth is very critical. 1 day delivery or a few hours or a few minutes delivery is becoming increasingly critical to satisfy today's consumer. We have now replicated our stock holding points across the country through Amazon FBA model and also through Swiggy Instacart, Ola Foods dark store model".

He continues, "Digital presence gave our brand the reach we needed into the market with very low capital and we soon were able to attract capital from the angel investing community to grow further".

NATURAL TASTE

Magicleaf is a health food brand innovating food products that are highly nutritious, uses 100% natural ingredients with zero sugar and zero artificial ingredients.

The nutritional quality of ingredients in our daily food has been deteriorating. Add to that, brands have been incorporating harmful ingredients like refined sugar, refined oil and other hidden artificial ingredients. This is leading to people developing all kinds of nutritional deficiencies which affects the quality of your health & wellbeing.

Magicleaf's core idea is to help people eliminate the bad food products from their diets and replace them with nutritious and equally good tasting food products.

This leads to feeling energized for a longer period of time and removes people's dependency on ingredients like sugar that give extreme spikes and crashes in energy.

Product research

Keeping an eye on the customer: A Customer's Perception of Quality is very different from the Objective Quality Standards that the brand internally follows at Magicleaf. Customers think that if the same product that they have been buying for years tastes the same consistently and has the same texture/properties it is of good quality. "One of our principles at Magicleaf is that we use the highest quality of ingredients, which is an invisible parameter of quality that is invisible the customer. Thus the critical part in the process is to deliver a high quality product with 100% natural ingredients while maintaining the costs. Our product costs are 2 times than other competitors but we maintain competitive pricing in the market. At the same price Magicleaf offers products that are 2-4 times higher quality than the others, passing on the benefits to the consumers," **Prathamesh Krisang - Co-founder & Growth - Magicleaf** comments.

Innovation is at multiple levels in the supply chain - right from farming of the stevia, to extraction, product formulation, distribution as well as marketing finished products. The brand has two dedicated labs with 12 full time food scientists constantly working towards making the products better each day.

Rolling it out to the market

Strategy to hit the right chord: "One of the primary things we do at Magicleaf is that before innovating we assess the market & the demand for it. We do this by Paying attention to Cultural & Technological signals to understand where the market is moving & then decide our product roadmap. After a lot of trial and error, we are moving into the direction where we have enough market insight in place before investing in any new invention. So most of the time, the innovation in hand comes with a well planned marketing strategy," Prathamesh adds.

The brand closely looks at broad level diet & nutritional trends, purchase behaviour of buyers on online grocery stores as well as retails markets, latest packaging formats, category competition etc. They also interact a lot with their existing customers who are very invested in the brand and give them valuable insights that play a vital role in this phase of research where they try to understand various trends and demands of the market.

Packaging innovation

Changing the trend: "Our packaging innovation is not exactly disruptive, but

HIGHLIGHTS

- The brand has a full fledged research lab in Chennai and Lucknow dedicated to product research & development.
- A team of 12 full time food scientists are constantly looking out for new ways to optimise their existing products as well as innovate new ones.
- The team spend most of their lab time in food innovation and have also received the National Startup Award 2021 in the food processing category.

> ONE OF THE PRIMARY THINGS WE DO AT MAGICLEAF IS THAT BEFORE INNOVATING WE ASSESS THE MARKET & THE DEMAND FOR IT. WE DO THIS BY PAYING ATTENTION TO CULTURAL & TECHNOLOGICAL SIGNALS TO UNDERSTAND WHERE THE MARKET IS MOVING & THEN DECIDE OUR PRODUCT ROADMAP.
>
> **–Prathamesh Krisang**
> Co-founder & Growth, Magicleaf

you call it unique. As a brand, we are not married to any product or category that we are launching. We want to test as many products' categories as possible in a short time. Whenever we launch a product, we launch it as a Pilot due to which we stick to good quality. We choose Standard Packaging Formats available in the market that can be further optimised for our product. We try to do innovation in the graphic part of the packaging such as labels, secondary packaging, and tertiary packaging in addition to the collaterals that go ahead with the packaging. We focus on Packaging Communication that has a larger scope of innovation and is the primary touch point of consumer attention.

At the end of the day, people buy a product after reading or seeing visuals on a label and the format is secondary. Our first objective is to make sure that we have nailed our positioning in the market that we are trying to address. This helps speed up the process of new launches, reduce risks and test if our product is ready for the market before going into manufacturing at a mass scale", Prathamesh adds.

The brand wants to be known as Innovators who are not trying to fight or disrupt an existing market but are creating an alternative market. They want to open up an alternative market for people by delivering to them products that are 100% Natural and Zero Sugar. There is a huge chunk of consumers who want to cut down the empty calories of sugar without giving up on the sweet taste. They want to cater to them. There is a famous quote by Buckminster Fuller, which inspires everyone in the Magicleaf team. The quote says - You never change things by fighting the existing reality, To change something build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete. And, this is what the brand believes in. So, when you talk about disrupting, you are trying to change an existing model but they are not interested in that. They are interested in creating an alternative reality where whatever they are building makes what you have right now as a system obsolete.

KEEPING IT REAL

The word 'Nirogam' means 'free of all diseases'. This forms the ethos of working for this brand. The ancient science of Ayurveda has abundant solutions for healthy living. Through their products, Nirogam aspires to bring them to light. Through an ideal blend of Technology with Ayurveda, they create medicines that are effective & convenient for all.

nirogam
A Healthy You, Naturally.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Nirogam gives easier access to Ayurvedic remedies.
- The brand offers easy-to-consume capsules, tablets and herbal powders.
- They hand-hold through every treatment for effective recovery.
- 20+ years of experience. 100+ products.
- Competent team of Ayurvedic Doctors. Healing you Inside-Out with Ayurveda.

In their two decades of relentless service, they have been able to cure millions of people around the globe. From common ailments to diseases considered incurable, Nirogam provides solutions for a plethora of problems. Besides medications, they guide people towards a naturally healthy lifestyle.
An Ayurveda activist at heart, Puneet Aggarwal is the founder & soul of Nirogam. His passion & diligence over the years has successfully made Nirogam one of the best Ayurvedic brands today. What had started as his small effort has now turned into a sea change, plying Ayurveda as a superior form of medicine. He aspires to reach more beneficiaries through Nirogam and lay the foundation for an ailment-free world.

The brand yearns to garner greater benefits by exploring Ayurveda to cure more diseases. Besides medication, they aim at providing overall guidance to people to lead a healthy, happy life. They wish to represent themselves as an ally you can count on when in need of healing guidance.

Product research

Innovation on mark: "Provided a business is listening intently to customers it is not difficult to make sure that the innovation has the customer and their demands in mind. This requires that the innovating team has no bias in relation to the product, the customer or the industry. Intense customer interaction helps to find exactly what the customer needs. In our case we found that people are looking for ease of use, convenience, simplicity and something that fits in with their routine. Once we address the consumer demand through innovation, the only strategy left is to educate consumers about the solution and create awareness. We need to tell them the outcome from the innovation and how that matches their needs. The marketing strategy is the process of taking care of the customer's expression of interest and making them aware of the solution that we have come up with," **Puneet Aggarwal, Founder, Nirogam mentions.**

"Disruption is of use only if it brings about radical change that is both relevant and appealing to consumers. So, rather than making it unique, we focus on disruption that is relevant and impactful without missing out on the core principle of simplicity. Ayurveda being an individualistic science, we are constantly looking for commonalities amongst consumers that can be addressed by our solutions. We can then customize consumer experiences by offering combinations of these solutions," he adds.

Go to market strategy

Ayurveda for good: Once the customer need has been identified, the team gets into weekly calls with stakeholders / the team to brainstorm about the consumer voice they hear. They identify a pattern and come up with ideas to innovate on available

solutions to make them more adaptable.

In Ayurveda there is a huge information gap between the advocates of Ayurveda like the doctors/experts/vaidyas and the commercial/marketing teams who are out there selling the products. This necessitates constant product innovation to close the gap and make Ayurvedic products simpler to use and less daunting to consumers. They are continuously conducting product research and looking for solutions to achieve this.

Packaging innovation

Best fit: "Many Ayurvedic remedies include products that are unpleasant to the palate, inconvenient to use on-the-go, and may comprise a number of different kinds of components in liquid and powder forms. This can put off consumers, especially the new generation of consumers who want simple, easy, convenient solutions that fit into their routines. That's why we're packaging our products into forms that retain the authenticity of the product while making them simple to use. We keep in mind our CASA (Convenient, Authentic, Simple, Appealing) motto while exploring innovation in packaging and design," Puneet highlights.

> "DISRUPTION IS OF USE ONLY IF IT BRINGS ABOUT RADICAL CHANGE THAT IS BOTH RELEVANT AND APPEALING TO CONSUMERS. SO, RATHER THAN MAKING IT UNIQUE, WE FOCUS ON DISRUPTION THAT IS RELEVANT AND IMPACTFUL WITHOUT MISSING OUT ON THE CORE PRINCIPLE OF SIMPLICITY. AYURVEDA BEING AN INDIVIDUALISTIC SCIENCE, WE ARE CONSTANTLY LOOKING FOR COMMONALITIES AMONGST CONSUMERS THAT CAN BE ADDRESSED BY OUR SOLUTIONS.
>
> **–Puneet Aggarwal**
> Founder, Nirogam

PLANT-BASED APPROACH

Only Earth was conceptualized as an idea to tap the fast growing plant-based industry, in order to cater to the huge gap the vegan consumer market was attending to when selecting a decent plant-based milk option.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The brand has taken a conscious call to not develop a D2C selling platform as they realized the cost of acquisition of customers was quite steep.
- On the marketing front, the brand's strategy from the beginning has been primarily to build brand awareness and drive consumer trials. They have partnered with relevant influencers from all walks of life to collaborate with them and talk about the brand, create content and recipes using their products.
- They work closely with 20 odd Distributors across the country. They have aggressively onboarded the distributors covering all their key selling points so that the focus remains on the fulfillment across retail, ecommerce and HORECA channels.
- The brand's innovation pipeline would consist of another 15 SKU's in 2022 across different categories.

In spite of the presence of many reputed brands in the market with dairy alternative offerings, the taste and quality of the product was nowhere near to what was available in the western markets. Oat Milk and Coconut Milk as products did not really have a play in India as Soy and Almond Milk dominate the non-dairy category. Coconut milk as a product was only available for culinary use and not a beverage.,

Plant Based industry is touted to be the next big thing in the food and beverage category. It is projected that within this century we would see massive change in our food system to such an extent that more meat & dairy is expected to come from plants than animals in the coming times. Since **Kunal Mutha, Founder, Only Earth** launched his brand in mid of 2021, he has been leveraging the tailwinds with this Industry and expanding their operations at quite a rapid pace.

Product research

Finding a niche: The brand decided to build and expand both the Oat and Coconut milk category in India. Through various digital and in store marketing initiatives combined with aggressive sampling they have managed to have a fair bit of success in doing so. "The process of developing our products was quite challenging as we needed to replicate the taste of dairy milk. Once we developed a product, we had a tasting session with a panel," Kunal notes.

"We have developed our products in such a way that it can be easy enough for people to quit dairy. The taste and consistency of our products make it an ideal option to be used for various occasions. We offer variants that are unsweetened, ensuring that they are lower in calorie count. We source high-quality key ingredients from European countries. Our products include a high intake of protein, calcium, vitamins, minerals, and fibre which are either naturally present or fortified into the product– all critical to your nutrition," Kunal adds.

"I turned Vegan in 2019 once I became aware of the cruelty in our food system. I was hard hit once I got to know how animals are slaughtered at a very young age when they are not productive enough for the animal agriculture industry. The switch ever since then was quite easy to be honest as I had a strong and compelling reason to take this stand for the animals. Being an amateur athlete who had completed 3 Ironman triathlon races, I have been hugely benefited from adopting a plant based diet. The recovery period after long hours of training was simply unbelievable. I cured my palpitation issue in my heart which doctors had asked me to live with for the rest of my life. But, we had our own set of challenges starting as a new brand in the market. Initially it was quite challenging to attract good talent as prospects were vary of joining a new startup. Similarly creating the distribution network took a lot of convincing as the distributors were not convinced of onboarding a new brand as the offtakes from the consumers might not happen as desired," Kunal highlighted.

Go to market strategy

Market ready approach: "We planned to sell our products across 4 channels. Modern trade and general trade is where we went

> WE DO NOT HAVE A FIXED BUDGET ALLOCATED FOR THE NPD TEAM. KNOWING THE IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPING UNIQUE TASTING AND NUTRITIOUS PRODUCTS WE GIVE A FREE HAND TO THE TEAM TO USE ALL REQUIRED RESOURCES FOR PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT.
>
> **–Kunal Mutha**
> Founder, Only Earth

aggressive and placed our products in 1,000 stores. E-commerce was also an area of focus with products listing on 16 online platforms such as Amazon, Big Basket, Flipkart etc. HORECA has been a growth driver for us as we have partnered with many coffee and hotel chains across India. We do not have a fixed budget allocated for the NPD team. Knowing the importance of developing unique tasting and nutritious products we give a free hand to the team to use all required resources for product development," Kunal highlights.

The plant based category is expected to cross INR 500 crores by 2025. The industry would continue to grow exponentially with a CAGR of 20%. One of the leading trends that Kunal admits of this category is 'Conscious Consumption'. Since the start of the pandemic, consumers have been opting for nutritious food, which would help them improve their health and build immunity. The environmental impact of their food choices is also playing out in consumers' minds while making a decision to purchase a product.

Packaging innovation

Keeping the need in mind: To stand out from the cluttered retail shelf, Only Earth had a clear mandate of using colourful, vibrant earthy colours on their packs. As an environmentally conscious brand, they have tried to minimize the use of plastic in their products. The innovation pipeline that consists of spreads and cheese would be in glass packaging for the retail packs. The brand team is also exploring use of reverse printing in the pressure sensitive labels to get assets to display more information on the label.

Each pack colour represents the environmental initiative that the brand is associated with. Blue colour background on the Almond Pack represents the Ocean conservation initiative, Green colour on the coconut milk pack represents the Afforestation initiative and Oat milk represents the wildlife protection initiative that Only Earth is associated with.

When summing up his brand ethos and mentioning how he would love the customer to perceive his brand, Kunal signs off by saying, "We would aim to be known as a disruptor as we wish to innovate and offer delicious products to consumers, which would make them switch to a healthier plant based lifestyle".

RECYCLED FOR GOOD

UNIREC, founded in June 2021 by Kapil Bhatia, manufactures shirts, blazers, and trousers from recycled polyester fabrics. Each garment, the founder says, recycles around 12 PET bottles.

UNIREC SUSTAINABLE CLOTHING

HIGHLIGHTS

- The brand wants to reduce carbon emissions worth 1 million tonnes and 10 million tonnes. So as a reverse calculation example, they aim to sell 500,000 garments this year and 5 million garments in the next three years.
- A new player in the arena, the brand has been able to sell more than 800 pieces through its D2C (direct-to-consumer) website.
- The brand is also eyeing expansion into the international markets and wants to have a presence in the Middle East, real soon.

UNIREC is an organisation which makes garments and workwear /uniforms made from fabrics, which are made from recycled PET bottles. These fabrics are procured from their partners who are registered under the GRS (Global Recyclable Standard) certification, thereby ensuring the genuineness of the fabrics procured by them. Their product range includes t-shirts, shirts, trousers, blazers/jackets and accessories. The team at UNIREC is into manufacturing of garments, uniforms and accessories under its parent company Brandstore India Pvt Ltd since over 20 years now and they currently cater to more than 150 corporates, educational institutions and govt. institutions for their requirement of uniforms and workwear.

UNIREC has been launched with a singular aim of ensuring that plastic that is consumed by us stays in the economy and does not reach the environment. They are looking to ensure that their products made from recycled PET bottles are not only trendy and fashionable, but also make sure that every individual is now playing their part in protecting our oceans and our environment.

Product research

From waste to good: "Innovation is a continuous process. We always wanted to create a product which would not only be functional and comfortable, but also would be environment friendly. But as luck would have it, the pandemic hit all of us and we had to put this entire project on a back burner. It was only in the middle of 2021 we decided to reignite this project as the situation completely justified the need for it. We had learnt to cope with the pandemic, one of the major changes in our lifestyles in those 18 months were the excessive use of single use plastic, be it in the form of bags, wrappers or PET bottles. The least we could therefore do now is launch a product where the garments are made from recycled PET bottles which would at the least offset our consumption of PET bottles and plastic," **Kapil Bhatia, Founder and CEO, UNIREC** mentions.

Kapil says that after running a family business for several years, he wanted to explore the larger apparel industry. About five years ago, this idea led him to establish a separate company, Brandstore India. Brandstore India makes uniforms for about 150 corporates including Vodafone, McDonald's and more. His plunge into the sustainable clothing space, Kapil says, came after years of market research. Each garment made by UNIREC recycles around 12 PET, short for polyethylene terephthalate, the chemical name for polyester, bottles (of 1 litre). It also reduces carbon emissions by two kilograms. The company also has a Global Recyclable Standard (GRS) certification – an international, voluntary, full-product standard that tracks and verifies the content of recycled materials in a final product.

> AS WE GOT INTO MANUFACTURING, WE REALIZED THAT THIS ENTIRE EXERCISE WOULD BE FUTILE IF THE PRODUCT ENDS UP GOING IN A PLASTIC PACKET WITH A PLASTIC TAG. KEEPING THIS IN MIND ALL OUR PRODUCTS ARE PACKED IN A PAPER BOX, WHICH IS RECYCLABLE AND EVEN THE PRODUCT TAG HAS PLANTABLE SEEDS.
>
> **–Kapil Bhatia**
> Founder and CEO, UNIREC

Go to market strategy

Spreading awareness: The brand is looking to target all segments and age groups especially the millennials and Gen Z as these would be the most impacted by our current habits of use of plastic bottles and the consequences of the same. The brand's focus will be to go D2C through their own website, www.unirecstore.com and through sustainable e-commerce platforms and fashion e-commerce platforms. While they do this, they will continue to present this offering to their B2B clientele as well.

"Most businesses are consumer driven and ours is no different. The seed of this idea of manufacturing garments made from PET bottles was sown in our heads by one of our potential customers only at a trade show that we participated in. Once we understood what they wanted, we realized that in Europe this was already being done on a massive scale and from there on , we kept looking at multiple possibilities as a result of which today we have a comprehensive range comprising of Tshirts, Trousers, Jackets and very soon to launch Shirts and the women's collection," Kapil elaborates.

Packaging innovation

Interesting approach: "As we got into manufacturing, we realized that this entire exercise would be futile if the product ends up going in a plastic packet with a plastic tag. Keeping this in mind all our products are packed in a paper box, which is recyclable and even the product tag has plantable seeds. So, instead of throwing away the tag, the customer can plant the seed and contribute to nature in their own way," Kapil points out.

Kapil highlights that it is no good in calling themselves the disruptors or the innovators, instead he wants UNIREC to be known as enablers and change agents whose singular mission is to ensure that plastic stays in the economy and out of the environment. Their simple mantra is to reduce carbon emissions and make a positive contribution to climate change one person at a time, one garment at a time.

UNADULTERATED BEAUTY

India's 1st Customised Ayurvedic Beauty and Wellness Brand, Vedix offers customised skincare, haircare and wellness products to its consumers, formulated on the underlying principle that each individual has a unique set of characteristics that need to be addressed independently. It leverages the power of Big Data and technology to understand its customers' requirements and curate specific solutions. The company now aims to clock INR 500 crore in revenues by 2026.

vēdix™

HIGHLIGHTS

- Vedix has an in-house warehouse that processes more than 10,000 orders a day and has the capacity to triple that number to meet seasonal demand.
- Having tied up with leading delivery companies allows the brand to maintain industry-leading delivery timelines across more than 19,000 pin codes.
- Over the next three years, Vedix plans to grow its business 4x by expanding into other categories, expanding on to other platforms and foraying into international markets such as the US and Middle East.
- Serving more than a million customers, the brand has also doubled its revenue over the last three years.

Under the aegis of IncNut Digital, customized haircare, skincare and wellness brand Vedix was established in 2017. IncNut founders realised that most women were not satisfied with the products they were using, and were frustrated with constantly trying something new without the certainty of it suiting them. A further in-depth survey allowed them a more thorough understanding of women's issues with skin and haircare products, and motivated the founders to talk to Ayurvedic doctors and conduct an in-depth research. Thus was born Vedix, a brand that endeavoured to challenge the notion of 'one size fits all' and to break the vicious cycle of trial and error that often led to unsatisfactory results. Vedix sought to provide customized Ayurvedic solutions in the beauty and wellness space for both men and women.

Product research

Building a strong core: Innovation has been the core of Vedix. The brand uses technology to recommend customized products to customers based on their doshas. "The journey has been very exciting and challenging at the same time as we always try to come up with new and innovative ways of making Ayurveda products in modern formats for easy use. We also have a very interesting feedback loop mechanism once we have sent the product. After 10 days, we also send out a feedback form to the customer to know their efficacy levels and if they aren't satisfied then we send them a revised product. All of this is done with the help of Machine Learning techniques that have been developed internally to help us synthesize consumer characteristics and experiences. So, it is a 2-way educational journey where we also learn from the customer about where we can improve," **Jatin Gujrati, Business Head, Vedix** mentions.

Go to market strategy

Reaching the customer: "The concept of customisation was completely new when we launched Vedix. We had to spend time building customer awareness on why this was better than a conventional approach. However, once customers saw the impact of customisation and the results it delivered, the brand took off. Today, we have one of the highest retention rates in the industry which reflects the value that customisation adds for our customers," says Jatin Gujrati, Business Head, Vedix. The core of Vedix is the Tridosha theory of Ayurveda. Every person is born with their unique set of doshas (Vata, Pitta and Kapha) that make their Prakuriti, and true Ayurvedic solutions are customised to address each individual's uniqueness. Vedix seeks to achieve this by understanding the imbalance in one's current state of doshas (vikruti) through a questionnaire, and then leverage Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence-driven technology to craft hyper customised products. "We want to modernise Ayurveda, its knowledge, concoction and delivery to make it

> A SOPHISTICATED YET SIMPLE APPROACH WITH MINIMALISTIC DEPICTION OF AYURVEDA IN A BRANDED GRID, DOSHA GRID AS WE CALL IT, IS THE MOST PRIMARY KEY ELEMENT IN OUR DESIGN LANGUAGE. IT ENCAPSULATES THE WORD VEDIX USING SIMPLE GEOMETRIC SHAPES AND IS INSPIRED BY CATEGORISATION IN CUSTOMISATION.
>
> **–Jatin Gujrati**
> Business Head, Vedix

accessible to the time-pressed consumer. Big Data, AI and cutting-edge technology are leveraged to craft customised solutions for each individual and continuously incorporate consumer feedback to deliver an ever-improving product," explains Gujrati.

Being a D2C brand Vedix primarily is focused on all social media channels and other digital platforms to spread awareness about the brand and drive sales. The team believes that the customers are their biggest endorsers and hence they use a lot of customer testimonials to market the brand. Product research is the core on which the brand is built. "Even before we sold our first product, we had a R&D team in place made up of Ayurvedic doctors and formulators who created the digital version of the ayurvedic questionnaire. This questionnaire or as we call VPQ, helps us identify the right dosha profile of our customers. The team then went on to create the right set of oils, shampoos and serums appropriate for each profile type. We continue to have a well-staffed R&D team that creates new products and works on improving the efficacy of existing products by leveraging thousands of data points from our customers on how the products are working for them," Jatin informed.

Packaging innovation

Rolling it right: Vedix as a concept amalgamates wisdom of ayurveda with modern formats & delivery. Vedix being a disruptor aims to stand out in the marketplace with a sophisticated and instantly recognizable brand image that would eventually become the high standard for the category. With customisation the brand had a unique opportunity to create a proposition that stood out through sophistication and authenticity.

"We are a disruptor brand as we are the World's 1st customised Ayurvedic brand. We are the 1st ones to use AI and ML to suggest customised products to the customer. A sophisticated yet simple approach with minimalistic depiction of ayurveda in a branded grid, 'Dosha' grid as we call it, is the most primary key element in our design language. It encapsulates the word Vedix using simple geometric shapes and is inspired by categorisation in customisation," Jatin further sums up.

PALETTE FOR A CHANGE

Wakao Foods is India's first Brand that makes products from the superfood – Jackfruit. This Goa-based sustainable food brand offers handpicked natural products with a vision of benefiting the planet.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The brand offers a range of naturally grown, plant-based products in ready-to-eat and ready-to-cook forms.
- Their current focus product is Jackfruit and they will expand their offerings to include multiple food products, sources and categories in the near future!
- The brand supports indigenous agri-practices, fair prices for farmers, prioritizing top-quality natural produce, and bringing it at the best available value for their customers. They ensure the highest standards of safety & eco-friendly practices in all aspects of their business.

Wakao Foods stands for creating a better tomorrow – one where humanity thrives, with products that are curated from ethically grown and sourced produce that is then hygienically processed and packaged. All Wakao products have no preservatives with a shelf life of 1 year and require no refrigeration. With sustainability and veganism being the need of the hour, Sairaj Dhond, Founder & CEO, Wakao Foods sought a solution that could mimic meat for even diehard non-vegetarians. After a year of trials and experimentations with some of India's best chefs, he founded Wakao, a brand that is true to his vision! His other business ventures include lighting and solar solutions brand and real estate restoration.

Product research

New taste: Every brand has to be customer-centric and it's very important to get feedback from the customers. "We, as a brand, take feedback very seriously, and based on what our customers are interested in and their liking and responses, we keep on tweaking our products and brewing them. As far as the strategy is concerned we always keep in mind what the consumer would want or need. Nothing is easier or difficult, it's how you market the product and create the brand story favourable to the customer," **Sairaj Dhond, Founder & CEO, Wakao Foods** informs.

He adds, "Product research is absolutely important and it's an ongoing process. During the development stage we had sent a set of products to restaurants and friends who could cook better and requested them to make their favourite dishes and explore more out of our products. After the product was launched, we always encouraged our consumers to share feedback and suggestions to make it better and suitable for different taste buds. We have multiple teams of consultants even in the manufacturing setups we keep on researching and improving the products so there is always dedicated effort going into R&D and we have allocated enough funds for our product development".

Go to market strategy

Keeping it customer ready: He continues, "When the innovation happened, we knew that we had a new product on hand which had never been introduced to the industry, in fact, it is as good as a category creation. The idea was to reach out to consumers and educate them first. So, we educated them on what Wakao Foods was all about, the nutritional values, benefits, and new varieties to explore for Jackfruit. Based on that we came into the market".

> THE IDEA WAS TO REACH OUT TO CONSUMERS AND EDUCATE THEM FIRST. SO, WE EDUCATED THEM ON WHAT WAKAO FOODS WAS ALL ABOUT, THE NUTRITIONAL VALUES, BENEFITS, AND NEW VARIETIES TO EXPLORE FOR JACKFRUIT. BASED ON THAT WE CAME INTO THE MARKET.
>
> **–Sairaj Dhond**
> Founder & CEO, Wakao Foods

Further when asked about the imprint the brand is leaving on the industry, he says "We have innovated a category that did not exist before. Jackfruit as mock meat has never been shown in India and once we have launched we can witness the excitement and demand as far as disruption, we are here to disrupt the market, in the sense we want to take this fruit to the world from the backyard of our house and hence we will disrupt the market".

At Wakao, the brand is passionate about healthy, sustainable food. Their goal is to bring ethically sourced, sustainably grown food to the customer's dinner table and explore alternative foods in their search for wholesome products that are good for their customers' health and also great for the planet. The brand supports cruelty-free food and a vegan way of life.

Packaging innovation

Versatile outlook: Packaging is the face of the product and very important for the brand. The team's idea was to design it in an international format that can look classy and whoever checks the product should feel tempted to try it. When one does the packaging designs one should make sure that the brand ethos well and imbibed it in the packaging, what is inside the box should also be visible on the package as it is the first impression to an e-consumer when he sees the box whether he wants to purchase the box or not hence it should be attractive a well informative.

The brand wants to be known as disruptive and unique because it is itself a new category and it is a product idea no one has dared to introduce. It is a superfood that was ignored in India and the brand brought it to light and in current times everyone knows Jackfruit and Wakao in India because of the efforts we took in the branding and the packaging and the product development hence it is a very unique offering, they are as good as the synonym for the jackfruit today, when people think of jackfruit they think of Wakao and that is the unique kind of trend that we want to set.

FROZEN WONDERS

White Cub has been pioneering innovative vegan ice creams since 2013 and what is remarkable is that most of the growth for the brand has been through 'word of mouth' marketing. That's what we call the power of innovative products.

Indulge! It's Good for You ...

HIGHLIGHTS

- The brand is looking to mark its footprint in other countries starting exports thsi year.
- WhiteCub also plans to open more parlors in Metropolitan Cities like Mumbai, Pune, and Bangalore in 2022.
- WhiteCub has been awarded the PETA Vegan Food Award consecutively in 2013 and 2014.
- It has been awarded GOI's Deptt. Of Science & Technology Award of Excellence.
- As a business, WhiteCub is the proud alumni of Nexus, an Innovation Hub and Business Incubator powered by the US Embassy, ACIR.
- The company has a self-operated pan-India distribution network of its products.

WhiteCub is a subsidiary of Compassionate Choices Pvt Ltd, which is India's pioneering initiative in the field of vegan dairy alternatives. The brand offers a variety of dairy-free, gluten-free & trans fats-free products for people who want to live a vegan and healthy life. Some of WhiteCub's products like butter and nut spread are enriched with Vitamins B12 and D as well.

The company started in 2013 with a mission to make Dairy Free Foods easily accessible in India. The brand 'WhiteCub' has been specifically created to fill in certain crucial gaps. Before WhiteCub, there was no Ice cream in the Indian market suitable for people looking for Dairy Free and healthy alternatives.

Product research

Identifying the need gap: India is a milk loving nation. When White Cub started back in 2013, almost a decade ago, veganism and plant based products were still relatively a new concept in India. The idea of dairy free products and ice-cream were new for the Indian taste palette. But since they are the pioneer of the Vegan, Dairy Alternative market segment, they already knew their target audience, their taste, their preferences and their demands.

Challenge at stake: The real challenge the brand faced was to attract consumers outside the bubble of their target audience in households where milk based products were very common but since they were already successful in the market, they were easily able to spread the word about their innovation, products and offerings in the target segment and they helped the brand spread the word through word of mouth marketing. "It was a challenge to give our vegan, dairy free ice-creams the similar mouth feel, texture, health value and nutrition as dairy based ice-creams," mentions **Sonal, Founder and CEO of WhiteCub.**

Go to market strategy

Creating the market for growth: "We conducted market research in our community and city to gauge the reception of our products among the masses. We conducted a survey in our society and took feedback on various parameters like taste, texture, mouth feel etc of our ice-creams and products from the people who participated. They loved our products and rated us highly. Many of them became our clients in the process. We also started to share our product samples in Potlucks and various vegan community events and gatherings. The people who loved our products spread the word in their own circle. Since there was a lack of such products in the market, when we came with our product offerings, people were delighted to find our brand and got what they wanted-a vegan, dairy alternative brand," Sonal highlights.

Packaging innovation

Developing the innovation: The brand researched a lot of relevant recipes that could work for their product and locally sourced all the ingredients to manufacture

> MOST BRANDS PREACH ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY, WE PRACTICE IT. WE USE REUSABLE AS WELL AS BIODEGRADABLE PACKAGING IN OUR PRODUCTS. THE CARRY BAGS WE USE ARE ALSO BIODEGRADABLE. WE USE DIFFERENT COLOUR SCHEMES IN OUR PRODUCT PACKAGING FOR DIFFERENT PRODUCTS.
>
> **–Sonal**
> Founder and CEO, WhiteCub

the products. With those ingredients, they did a lot of permutation and combination, and did various experiments to come up with exactly what they believe to be the ultimate best product. "We didn't want to use unhealthy ingredients in our products. So, we searched and sourced only healthy alternatives to make our products. After we zeroed down on the recipe, we went ahead to manufacture our products on a large scale to reach the masses. We've kept our packaging keeping our product appeal in mind and also being conscious of the environment. Most brands preach about sustainability, we practice it. We use reusable as well as biodegradable packaging in our products. The carry bags we use are also biodegradable. We use different colour schemes in our product packaging for different products. For example, for our Hazelnut-Cashew Spread, we use orange colour in the packaging to show warmth, and for our Soy-Coconut Curd we've kept blue colour to show elegance and coolness," Sonal further informed.

Keeping it real: When asked how she defines her presence in the D2C space, Sonal mentions "It is both disruptive and unique, because we are a completely vegan and dairy free brand. We fill the need-gaps of dairy alternative, vegan brands in the market. Our target audience prefers vegan, plant based, dairy free products. We disrupted the Indian market because we are the pioneers of vegan, dairy free products and before us there was no vegan, dairy alternatives brand in the market. We would love to be known as both innovators and disruptors. We are the innovators because we found out that there is a demand for dairy free, vegan based products in the Indian market and we were the first brand to bring products to fill the need-gaps in the market. We are disruptors because we disrupted the Indian vegan market and since our success, a lot of brands and companies have entered the market segment but our customers still love and prefer our products".

COMFORT FIRST

Zymrat is a brand built on 2 simple beliefs - a. Great products shouldn't cost a fortune and b. Great products should be accessible to everyone. An exclusive athleisure brand for men, this brand stands tall on innovation and ethos to present to the world designs that suit every man.

zymrat

HIGHLIGHTS

- From day 1 of starting Zymrat, the team knew that they were not getting into the business of selling t-shirts, they were rather getting into the business of solving real problems that the community of active people face.
- They strongly believe that their product's first problem-solving approach is what has got them this far, and they wouldn't trade it for anything else. If they were to quantify it, they would say that at least 30% of their time goes into research and development.
- Zymrat is not an SKU heavy company. If you see the historical data of Zymrat and compare it to some of their contemporaries, you would note that many brands have been selling the same products for more than 3-4-5 years, but at Zymrat, they launch the improved versions every 6 months to a year at most. This is their strength, and they will continue to play with it.
- It took them nearly 5000 various compositions to look at and even sample a few of them to finally arrive at the raw materials and composition of fabrics that they use today.

Zymrat believes that before even thinking of innovation, the problem statements must be crystal clear, and only then the innovation would be meaningful. In fact, innovation comes at the end, the foundation of any innovation in a consumer product has multiple large customer needs and problems at its core. The tough job for the brand was to validate whether the problem that they were looking at was big enough or not.

Product research

Starting from scratch: "We had identified the problem early on, but we didn't want to take the chance of our own biases acting upon our decisions, and hence we spoke with 100s of fitness enthusiasts across different parts through phones, calls, and in-person meetings to identify how real the problem was. The problem that we identified had two faces - one was the excruciatingly high price points of products in International brand showrooms, and the other was that all of the best and most innovative products from international brands either never entered to the India or come very late. We could see many people in the community importing goods by all means from other countries to India for their personal use. When we spoke about this to more people, we realized that the problem was as real and as large as it could get, and only then we started thinking about solving it through multiple avenues, innovation being one," **Ujjawal Asthana, Co-Founder & CEO, Zymrat** mentions.

Once the larger problem had become clear for the brand, the vision was clear as well. Once the vision was clear, everything else started becoming easier. "Execution of such a strong vision is always a tough nut to crack, but when the heart is in the right place, you enjoy the process. We broke the larger problem into smaller customer problems and solved those. For example, one of the things that came up strongly in our research was Odour. Performance wear products made with polyester/nylon have the tendency to entrap the bacteria and keep producing odour despite several washes. After landing on this problem, we spent nearly a year testing out and researching different methods to stop odour production in performance wear products, and that is how SuperSilva came into being. SuperSilva is a sustainable silver ion-based technology that kills bacteria before it could produce odour in the garment. We have identified multiple problems that disturb consumers in leading their day to day active life comfortably. We have solved a few, and we are working towards solving many. The process is both easy and difficult. Easy because it is a lot of fun, and difficult because every innovative product must be born out of a real customer problem, and should work towards solving that problem, or else it will be tagged useless," **Ankita Riva, Co-Founder & COO, Zymrat** adds.

Go to market strategy

Stretching it out rightly: Marketing strong products is all about authenticity and authority. The claims have to be backed by tests and reports. But more than that it has to be backed by multiple real people. The team at Zymrat has always believed in the

> WHEN IT COMES TO D2C BRANDS LIKE US WITH UNIQUE PRODUCTS, THE STORYTELLING MUST FALL IN THE RIGHT PLACES.
>
> **–Ujjawal Asthana**
> Co-Founder & CEO, Zymrat

power of community. "In fact, we credit a majority of our success to the community of fitness enthusiasts, coaches, experts from crossfit, running, yoga, strength conditioning and more. We have a network of coaches and experts across India who work with us on product testing, and if they like and believe in the product, they also talk about it openly. When it comes to D2C brands like us with unique products, the storytelling must fall in the right places. No exaggeration, no false claims but only the true nature of the product with details for those who are interested in learning about the nitty-gritty. Being digital-first helps a lot. We think and live digital, so

> WE HAVE IDENTIFIED MULTIPLE PROBLEMS THAT DISTURB CONSUMERS IN LEADING THEIR DAY TO DAY ACTIVE LIFE COMFORTABLY. WE HAVE SOLVED A FEW, AND WE ARE WORKING TOWARDS SOLVING MANY.
>
> **–Ankita Riva**
> Co-Founder & COO, Zymrat

our campaigns are designed accordingly. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, OTT, YouTube and the display network of multiple ad exchanges allow us to take our innovation and products to millions of Indians digitally," Ujjawal added.

Packaging innovation

Sustainable approach: "Our sustainable approach starts with our packaging. We use 100% recyclable or biodegradable inner and outer packaging for our products. We have worked with a variety of compositions, right from recycled plastic to paper to duplex boards to create a packaging experience for our customers, and have had multiple beautiful reactions. We have also used surprise elements such as freebies, handwritten notes, printed inserts which have left the customers happy and made them talk about us with their peer group. Like products, we continue to innovate on this front too," Ankita adds.

"We are the disruptors. There is a status quo in the Indian market that must be challenged, and that is being challenged by us as we speak. The status quo has been established both in terms of price and brand image. In our minds, we have believed for the longest time that the best products can only be manufactured by international brands and can only be sold in international brand showrooms at wallet burning price points. We are disrupting this belief one product and one consumer at a time, and our vision is to change this and make every Indian believe that Indian brands are equally potent, innovative and can make world-beating products," she signs off.

CREATING A STRONG & AGILE BUSINESS OPERATIONAL SET-UP

The e-commerce market growth and the rise of online shoppers is slowly leading to the growth of the D2C brands in India. However, to stay put in this new environment, brands need to tighten their operations further to make their customer facing position strong.

Owing to the pandemic and the subsequent lockdowns, there has been a significant surge in D2C brands, companies are now eyeing fresh investment to set up their own online stores. Brands are adopting the direct-to-consumer approach to develop a strong connection with consumers and offer a personalized brand experience. While brands are well aware of the benefits of establishing D2C operations, many of them are not yet able to build a strong online presence by streamlining all their operations.

Challenges galore

Brands often find it difficult to sustain operations on brand websites for a few key reasons, which are:

- Limited brand awareness

- Lack of seamless shopping experience throughout the purchase cycle.
- Limited budget to invest in technology, which can help them make operations agile and seamless.

Technology to the rescue

Technology implementations can change the way the brand functions and make its individual operations seamless along with collectively making all the brand operations connected to one another, to ensure that customer approaches are strengthened and made agile for every function.

The operational pointers every brand must keep an eye on to stay closer to their customer:

- When selling online a brand website plays a key role and ensuring that the website is aesthetically good with great pictures and it's mobile-friendly along with all the payment options including COD helps with customer acquisition.
- Faster loading pages and strong product recommendations to keep the consumer engaged, the longer time they spend on the website, the higher the chance they will buy products.
- Visual appeal improves engagement for consumers, the right set of pictures and information can help in faster conversion rate.
- Cart abandonment is a big factor for online shoppers, so to avoid this, brands must focus on making the checkout easy to handle.
- Load your checkouts with varied 'Call to Action' clicks as you don't want to re-direct consumers to other products or information pages, right before they are about to make a final purchase.

Inventory management & fulfillment is another key factor

Order management, which leads to error-free deliveries is a big aspect of the D2C ecosystem. When a company starts selling through multiple online and offline channels, then order management becomes a big task. In most cases automating the process of inventory management with the right allocation all across channels helps brands maintain an agile foothold. A D2C brand should invest in inventory management solutions to keep a centralized database of inventory across multiple warehouses and stores, with full visibility of stock movement and order management solutions to enable quick order processing by integrating all sales channels into one single platform.

The order management and inventory management solutions help make the processes automatic and leaves out the occurrence of mishaps and delays.

THE PILLARS OF STRONG BUSINESS OPERATIONS

- With a streamlined operational backbone, brands are able to offer a personalized brand experience to the customers
- With a connected backend and frontend operational backbone, the data flow is stronger, which the brands can use to build further
- With business operations automated, brands can invest their time to build direct customer connect, which helps increase their loyal customer base.

Supply chain management creates a strong business operations backbone

Supply-chain forms the backbone of any e-commerce business and plays a pivotal role in the success of any brand. The supply chain streamlining starts with keeping the inventory ready, placing them on the designated shelf, improving the picking and shipping of orders, and getting real-time information on the inventory and can be integrated into your existing ERP system as well.

A D2C brand should invest in inventory management solutions to keep a centralized database of inventory across multiple warehouses and stores, with full visibility of stock movement and order management solutions to enable quick order processing by integrating all sales channels into one single platform

Operational trends to watch out for

Growing need for quicker delivery: Today customers demand for faster delivery and do not want to wait even a few hours to have their purchase in hand. It is all about click, pay, and get the product right at your doorstep. A brand can achieve faster delivery by collaborating with multiple shipping providers to minimize the risk of fluctuation in serviceability.

Create a system for better return management: D2C brands on the one hand can have a quick reach with their customers, but managing to make everyone happy may not be easy. In this case, they should be prepared for quick return management. Backtracking the returns and thereby putting that to action to further initiate and help the customer with an order replacement needs to be done in real time. This is a big trend that brands need to keep a watch on and tackle as their proliferation in the market continues to increase.

Developing a strong CRM system: D2C is not just about selling directly to the customer, it's about developing a relationship between a brand and its consumer. A brand can leverage consumer data and develop a strong relationship to have consistent brand communication across platforms. A brand today is working towards deploying a CRM system that will help them attract customers, qualify leads, create targeted campaigns, manage customer data, and provide deep consumer insights. Building a strong CRM solution is fast becoming a rage within the ecosystem, so that brands can create better connections with their customers.

BRANDS WITH A STRONG BUSINESS OPERATIONS OVERVIEW

BRILLARE | CHUMBAK | DaMENSCH | ellementry | good dot | Happilo | moonshine

myPAPERCLIP | OZIVA | R for Rabbit | skoodle | SLEEPSIA Say Hello To Sleep | THE MAN COMPANY | THE SLEEP COMPANY backed by science

WHAT ARE THE PARAMETERS A BRAND WEIGHS TO MAKE AGILE OPERATIONS A REALITY?

INVESTMENT IN TECHNOLOGY

CONNECTED SYSTEMS

BETTER ACCESS TO CUSTOMER DATA

ROBUST SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT

TRIVIA CORNER

- Brillare is preparing to have a substantial physical presence in states with large markets, such as Kolkata, New Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Surat and many more piggybacking on an efficient and effective fulfillment process.
- OZiva is targeting customers from tier 2 and tier 3 cities as well - have shipped to 1500+ cities & towns in India. This is possible owing to their partnership with SAAS companies across India and scaling of their warehouse.
- Chumbak's connected omnichannel approach helps them get ~ 60% online and ~40% offline sales. Omnichannel allows them to give the customer visibility of the entire product range and the ease of shopping offline, return online or vice versa have become part and parcel of customer expectations today.

RESEARCH ORIENTED

11 years back, on 20th December 2009, a young pharmacist decided to embark on a journey to create personal care products that are honest, effective & responsible in a way they are formulated & communicated and that's how Brillare was born.

BRILLARE®

HIGHLIGHTS

- Brillare is preparing to have a substantial physical presence in states with large markets, such as Kolkata, New Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Surat and many more.
- They are looking at drawing up a digital strategy for reaching out to customers. The brand is planning to expand our digital footprint and develop a strong brand recall value
- They have 10,000 active tie-ups with salons across the country. And areheading in the direction of omnichannel presence.
- They are expanding their distribution network with a more focused approach on D2C branding, opening storefronts and selling through leading e-commerce websites such as Amazon, Nykaa and Flipkart.

Brillare's journey has been an eventful ride and has grown exponentially over the years. **CEO, Jigar Patel** started Brillare from a small 10X6 feet research lab with a team of just 5 people in Ahmedabad. Today, the brand is one of the leading and fastest growing personal care brands in India with an ambitious mission to build a truly natural brand that promises zero added water, zero synthetic chemicals and zero preservatives in all their products by 2023. All Brillare products are 100% vegan & natural with proven, dermatology-grade efficacy. They are especially tailored for the new age, conscious and aware generation who are looking for truthful natural solutions for their hair & skin concerns.

Retail presence & optimization

Science for everyone: During the pandemic, sales graphs of many companies took a hit, including Brillare's. It was during the pandemic when Brillare transitioned from a B2B to D2C company. They launched some innovative campaigns during the pandemic, which helped them evolve as a brand. The brand launched the 'Corona Safe Treatments' campaign for their salon partners in which they communicated and convinced their clients to go for safe hair and skin treatments. In this campaign, they encouraged salons to adopt the best hygiene practices and sanitisation measures. Along with this, the brand also provided them with a first-in-India, Hair MonoTreatments, which could prevent contamination and virus spreading through products. They also launched a B2B app, 'Brillare Direct', which allowed the salon customers to directly order their products and get them delivered to their doorstep in 48 hours.

As a company, They are planning an aggressive growth and intend to open 50 retail outlets by 2023, as well as increase our digital footprints by penetrating Tier II areas and pursuing global expansion opportunities. Jigar says, "When it comes to the strategies involved, I'd like to point out that we segregated our emphasis into three segments. The fact that we understood what our customers needed was the first step, followed by creating products that met the demands of our cautious and well-informed customers. Second, we concentrated on our distribution network. We began by partnering with salons, but gradually, we transitioned to a B2C strategy, opening retail storefronts and selling through ecommerce websites. Finally, we progressed down this path, carving out a position in the market and focusing not just on product development but also on consumer education. We discovered that when consumers go to salons, they not only seek for products that yield results, but they also get educated since a professional advises them on the benefits and drawbacks of using it. I am aware that this is a highly competitive market, but I plan to carve out my own niche".

> BEFORE GOING LIVE WITH THE OMNICHANNEL MODE, OUR OPERATIONS AND MARKETING TEAM WORKED ON CREATING A MODEL TO ACCURATELY PREDICT REQUIREMENTS AND ALSO THE DELIVERY PARTNERS WHO CAN BRIDGE THE GAP. FOR THE LAST THREE MONTHS, WE ARE FOCUSING ON GOING OMNICHANNEL BY OPENING RETAIL PRESENCE ACROSS MAJOR METRO CITIES AND GIVING CONSUMERS A CHANCE TO TOUCH AND FEEL OUR PRODUCTS.

–Jigar Patel
CEO, Brillare

Supply chain and fulfillment

Easy & agile: The brand's operations are driven based on one core factor i.e. data and processes. At Brillare, they have their own proprietary ERP system through which they manage their entire operations. Additionally, they use productivity tools like Trello along with seamless integration with their logistics and manufacturing partners too.

Talking about fulfillment Jigar adds, "Every business focuses on providing seamless customer experience in order to retain current and prospective customers. This will not be possible without an efficient and effective fulfillment process. One needs to ensure that they follow these ground-rule strategies to have greater impact on the consumers.

1. Classification of our inventory
2. System integration for visibility
3. Automating the process

The most important one is communicating with customers, which helps us know our customers and help them have better experiences".

Customer service

Taking every challenge on its face: "Pandemic has been a blessing in disguise. We are a 10 year old company and have been traditionally dealing in the salon business but during the pandemic when all salons were closed we tried to work on the D2C model and started our journey. We were overwhelmed by the love we receive for our range of products. Before going live with the omnichannel mode, our operations and marketing team worked on creating a model to accurately predict requirements and also the delivery partners who can bridge the gap. For the last three months, we are focusing on going omnichannel by opening retail presence across major metro cities and giving consumers a chance to touch and feel our products. We have got a good response till now and we plan to increase our reach by opening around 50 stores by the end of this year," Jigar highlights.

DESIGN STORY

Chumbak, India's joyful lifestyle brand has changed the way India perceives design. On successfully completing a decade in business the brand is eyeing to step into new territories to expand its horizon.

CHUMBAK

HIGHLIGHTS

- As a D2C brand Chumbak has adopted some of the best-in-class tools and technology to be able to offer seamless online-offline experiences. They have a number of partners for optimising various aspects of their business, such as Maker, Xeno and Netcore. For the main omnichannel back-end, they partner with Unicommerce, which provides Chumbak with a robust order allocation engine to significantly reduce the order fulfillment time and enhance the customer experience.
- The growth strategy for the brand is multi-layered. The first is to grow their Home category in depth, where they have a lot of headroom. At the same time, they want to keep refreshing their lifestyle business (watches, bags, beauty) for continuing customer engagement and repeat purchase.
- On the distribution front, Chumbak wants to double their store footprint – cautiously, as the environment gets more normalised. And they are seriously looking at the international market, where they see Chumbak's brand and product resonating with young women.

Design-led brands have always been considered to be expensive, luxurious, and made for a niche audience. In the past 10 years, Chumbak has changed the perception and today they stand as a design-led 'Mass-Tige' brand. On successfully completing a decade in business, Chumbak is ready to renew its brand's customer focus-design journey to make it more customer intrinsic.

Retail presence & optimization

Appealing presence: Brand-led design tells a single story that engages and evolves and over time, creating the 'fresh consistency' needed to build memorable and distinctive brands. In this way, design acts as the silent ambassador of a brand, whilst marketing works as the vocal ambassador of design. Chumbak's design ideology has always been inspired through the founders' travels, cultures from across the world, Indian art, and more. People today are looking for options that make them stand out or look different. Millennials are looking beyond just a lower price for their purchases. Societal values, status, social influence, et cetera. That dimension has become far more important than it was before. Today Chumbak has expanded its categories and offerings with the same design aesthetics. From Home decor, furnishing to accessories, the millennial woman is able to find something that suits her taste and requirements.

"Being a digital first brand, we have adopted an omnichannel approach. With advancements in direct-to-consumer (DTC) ecommerce, online experiences, and our B2C relationships we have undergone significant changes in our digital operations. Our approach is ~ 60% online and ~40% offline. Omnichannel, which gives the customer visibility of the entire product range and the ease of shopping offline, return online or vice versa have become part and parcel of customer expectations today. Customers increasingly demand quick delivery, painless exchange & easy returns. Backed by state-of-the-art technology and tools that help in smart order allocation basis various criteria (location, stock availability, delivery preferences for example) brands like Chumbak have been able to leverage the potential of omnichannel to its maximum," **Vasant Nangia, Chief Executive Officer, Chumbak.**

Supply chain and fulfillment

Right moves: "It's been a great journey, with a lot of sweat into detail. In terms of challenges- The first has been integrating technology deeply throughout the supply chain. This means stitching together various systems for seamless data flow, and using a variety of tools for optimising each element. The second has been orienting our staff – at the warehouse, our stores and in the offices – to understand how the entire customer journey has changed, particularly after the pandemic. Striking a balance between online and offline for every brand has important implications in terms of store sizes, store locations and staffing," Nangia adds.

Chumbak has carved its own niche with contemporary design and colourful products. It has recently introduced accent

> BEING A DIGITAL FIRST BRAND, WE HAVE ADOPTED AN OMNICHANNEL APPROACH. WITH ADVANCEMENTS IN DIRECT-TO-CONSUMER (DTC) ECOMMERCE, ONLINE EXPERIENCES, AND OUR B2C RELATIONSHIPS WE HAVE UNDERGONE SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN OUR DIGITAL OPERATIONS.
>
> **– Vasant Nangia**
> Chief Executive Officer, Chumbak.

furniture and a range of wall art as well, to complement its vast home and lifestyle offering. A segment that is driving growth is young women. As per an Ernst and Young report, this segment is growing fast, and now women constitute almost 44% of online shoppers. Women centric brands have a major runway for growth.

Customer service

Ready for the demand: He adds, "We are currently evaluating what role our stores need to play: for better customer experience, for supplying online orders and so on. This has resulted in, for example, in some cases moving to more prominent, but smaller stores. With the pandemic, we have had mutually beneficial arrangements with landlords that have helped a lot to tide over some difficult times. While we have temporarily slowed our pace of offline expansion till the world normalises, at the same time, we have beefed up our digital team, which includes both digital sales and technology. We have increased our brand visibility on third-party websites and started investing more to strengthen our bonds with our customer base in terms of CRM".

By building advanced data tracking systems to track behaviour and preferences of customers both online and offline, the brand has capitalized on consumer insights using a variety of data tools. A virtuous cycle is created by linking all data to a centralized CRM system. Systems like Xeno enable Chumbak to reach out to its customers regularly and at the right moments. The consumer is spending time at home more than ever now and hence there is a bigger need for home improvement or makeovers. Keeping this observation in mind, Chumbak has taken a conscious call to prioritize and grow its Home categories – Furniture & Storage, Dining & Kitchen, Bed & Furnishing, Home Décor and so on. One of the important strategies is to harmonize Chumbak's unique design sensibility across categories, and align the products with increasingly sophisticated consumer demands. A good example is furniture, where their focus is on accent furniture rather than run-of-the-mill stuff. This category is seeing steep growth with more and more shoppers putting trust in online for even somewhat higher ticket furniture purchases.

INNOVATIVE FIT

Untapped and underserved, the men's innerwear segment was once nothing less than a mammoth task for a start-up D2C brand to enter. But, DaMENSCH founders saw this as a golden opportunity that would give them a chance to make a difference through technology-backed innovative products that had never been seen or heard of before. The brand thus began its journey to create products for modern men that were distinct in features and soft to the touch.

DaMENSCH

HIGHLIGHTS

- Choosing between corn husk and paper-based packaging has allowed DaMENSCH to save more than 10 lakh units of single-use plastic which, if piled up, would measure up to 160 Burj Khalifas.
- Currently a ₹100 crore ARR (Annual Recurring Revenue) brand, it hopes to achieve more than thrice that in the next two years.
- While the innerwear segment for online platforms grew 2.5 times prior to COVID, DaMENSCH claims to have grown six times.
- The company has grown to a team size of 130 and intends on going up to 200. It has also moved to an office space that houses the entire team.

A D2C start-up in the men's apparel segment, DaMENSCH was conceived with the aim of introducing innovation and unparalleled functionality to men's daily wear. The intent was to begin with the most neglected and challenging part of the male wardrobe – the innerwear. Innerwear is the fastest growing apparel category where growth post COVID has been even faster. The brand believes that the loungewear segment will be the apparel of choice for their target group of conscious, progressive millennials and Gen-Z, and they want to be an integral part of their wardrobe. Innerwear was once a highly unorganised sector, but in the last five years, the market has moved towards more branded segments. As a category, about 10 per cent of purchases are now made online, which is indicative of an apparent shift in consumer behaviour.

Retail presence & optimization

Beginning from scratch: "The journey has been exhilarating to say the least. We started with the most neglected and challenging part of men's wardrobe - the innerwear and slowly tapped more categories including loungewear and casualwear. Our team also grew to 150+ members, and our revenue also reached 100 cr ARR. At DaMENSCH, we have invested in some of the most innovative and agile Order and Warehouse management systems available today. Along with our in-house analytics and focus on automation, we have been able to create visibility on the health of our supply chain and make operations as seamless as possible," **Gaurav Pushkar, Co-Founder, DaMENSCH** mentions.

Digitisation of every basic essential is the need of the hour, and the truth of today's world. Establishing an e-commerce platform providing multiple payment modes is convenient for customers. The best part of going digital is that it complements a brand's B&M outlet through BOPIS (Buy Online, Pickup In Store). And for DaMENSCH, it has been highly successful. In fact, majority of the orders that the brand receives are prepaid only, adding to the growth of Digital India. Currently a ₹100 crore ARR brand, DaMENSCH is looking to achieve more than thrice that within the next two years, backed by its technology-enabled omnichannel strategy. "We are also expanding rapidly across all departments, be it product, engineering, marketing or supply chain. We moved to an office space that allows us to house our new team, and boasts of an in-house studio as we gear up on focusing on our content-commerce strategy in the times to come," Gaurav added.

Supply chain and fulfillment

Getting agile: "We at DaMENSCH work on a hub-and-spoke model deploying regional distribution centres and a dark store construct to be able to meet our fulfilment task, while always keeping the end customers' buying experience in

> WE AT DAMENSCH WORK ON A HUB-AND-SPOKE MODEL DEPLOYING REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION CENTRES AND A DARK STORE CONSTRUCT TO BE ABLE TO MEET OUR FULFILMENT TASK, WHILE ALWAYS KEEPING THE END CUSTOMERS BUYING EXPERIENCE IN MIND.
>
> **–Gaurav Pushkar**
> Co-Founder, DaMENSCH

mind. We work with the most competitive players in the middle and last mile space to leverage both technology and delivery optimization to fulfill our orders in the shortest possible time. In the near future, we will also be launching our 'Same Day Delivery' commitment to our customers across major metros," Gaurav mentions.

"We have been able to standardise our supply planning and lead times along various legs of the supply chain, starting from procurement to end delivery to the customer. Building key metrics for these functions and a culture of operational rigour has allowed us to optimise our supply chain and be proactive in addressing areas of concern," he further highlights.

Customer service

Ruling with innovation: DaMENSCH's product range of innerwear includes odour cancelling underwear 'Deo-Soft' and 'Neo-Skin' – a thermo-regulating vest made from a curated composition of sustainable bamboo fibre, among other products catering to the comfort of the modern man. The brand plans to connect with these cohorts through their technological superiority and contemporary design. Indeed, all their collections are made with technical expertise to achieve the unthinkable. The contemporary designs are for modern men who think differently. The brand marries designs with today's forward-thinking men and their Deo-Soft collection is evidence of this.

In keeping with the predicted surge of the category, DaMENSCH has used its funding to bring in specialists in leadership roles and to increase the strength of its design, customer service and product teams in line with its core value of customer centricity. It has upped its marketing spends by 50 per cent, and continues to reach customers far and wide not just via website sales but also via its presence on marketplaces like Amazon, Myntra, Flipkart and Tata Cliq. "As we grow we want to ensure our customer experience continues to improve and that's the key thrust in our growth plans," Gaurav asserted.

ELEMENTS OF PERFECTION

Within a year of its launch, ellementry, had transformed many a home with its unique aesthetics, inspired by the elements. Specializing in simple luxury through handcrafted exclusivity, ellementry comes from a three-decade-long legacy of wooing the world with its exquisite and inspiring product range. It is the retail offshoot of Dileep Industries that has won many awards and accolades for exporting high-quality products to international brands.

ellementry

HIGHLIGHTS

- A thorough market analysis was carried out. Following that, Ayush and his team built the necessary infrastructure and launched ellementry as an ecommerce brand and marketplace in 2018.
- ellementry soon had eight physical stores across India's major cities, including Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Kochi and Hyderabad, to address this issue.
- The brand that started with kitchenware and tableware, is in its 3rd year of operation and has a complete range of homeware products today.
- The brand has a strong R&D department that keeps on researching in terms of material and design that are the right fit for Indian lifestyle. The brand thoroughly monitors the products, from manufacturing to retail outlet, to keep an eye on diversification so that they can deliver international quality products.

It all began when **Ayush Baid, Founder, ellementry** assisted his father with promoting his business-to-business handicraft exports. He noticed how well-received Indian handicrafts were on a global scale. The foundation stone for ellementry was sown while Ayush was in the final semester of his undergraduate degree in data analytics and business administration from University College London (University College of London).

Retail presence & optimization

Raising a brand: When talking about optimising and streamlining business operations, Ayush mentions, "We did our market research, reworked the strategies, worked on our team strength and gained a deeper understanding of our stakeholders, customers and the retail market. These are the following initiative that we had taken during this period:

Engaging customers – We engaged with our consumers through social media and online marketing to understand people's mindsets in real-time and channel our resources accordingly. We reached out to consumers through our customer support and strengthened the existing relationships. This is also one of the reasons our social media followers have organically grown.

Leverage social media capabilities– We have invested in social media advertising, making it easy for us to get in front of people likely to buy your products and convert them or send them into our sales funnel.

Pull marketing – For our e-commerce store, we have taken care of our website loading speed & navigation, blog posts and other valuable content like mobile optimised user interfaces and SEO visibility. All this serves as a pull mechanism to bring in customers.

Training sessions – We arrange regular training sessions and conferences to retain employees and keep up with industry trends. We train our employees as soon as they're hired and conduct regular training every six months to reorient them based on new consumer trends.

Smart remarketing – We are increasing our customer retention rates through remarketing. Shoppers are usually distracted and can easily forget their positive shopper experience. So, at your online stores or our brick and mortar stores, we remind them of their positive experience by engaging them with promotions and discounts based on their past purchases or current consumer trends".

Supply chain & fulfillment

Strong backbone: The brand has a sound retail order fulfilment process to ensure customer satisfaction. Unlike traditional retail distribution, where a customer has to go to a brick-and-mortar retail location to purchase an item. ellementry is the first Indian brand with a manufacturer-to-consumer offering, therefore facing little competition from brands curating similar products.

> SHOPPERS ARE USUALLY DISTRACTED AND CAN EASILY FORGET THEIR POSITIVE SHOPPER EXPERIENCE. SO, AT OUR ONLINE STORES OR OUR BRICK AND MORTAR STORES, WE REMIND THEM OF THEIR POSITIVE EXPERIENCE BY ENGAGING THEM WITH PROMOTIONS AND DISCOUNTS BASED ON THEIR PAST PURCHASES OR CURRENT CONSUMER TRENDS.
>
> **–Ayush Baid**
> Founder, ellementry

Being the manufacturer, they can afford competitive pricing, minimal dead inventory, adherence to international food safety norms, and faster lead times. Though during the pandemic, the prices of raw materials increased. The supply chain also got disrupted; everything was challenging, from procuring the raw material to delivering the end product to the consumer. "But we feel very proud to say that we as a team are not just able to overcome these new obstacles, but we had a better year in terms of growth and profit than the previous two years combined. During the pandemic, we had launched two new retail stores at two strategic locations- one in Select CITYWALK Mall, Saket, Delhi and one in Jawahar Nagar, Kochi," Ayush adds.

Customer approach

Tech for connect: Data and technology are the backbones of ellementry; they play a vital role in the brand's website and their retail stores. Therefore, this year too, they are putting action to digital transformation and accelerating their processes with technology. Though ellementry started as an e-commerce portal and within the first year, they saw the critical nature of having a physical presence because we recognised that along with online demand, the touch and feel component also influenced client purchasing decisions. To address this issue, they launched eight retail stores across India's major cities, including Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Kochi and Gurugram.

"There is an overall surge in-home product category during this pandemic, increasing our online sales. We also got tie-ups with various e-commerce platforms like -Amazon, Tata Cliq, Myntra, Nykaa, and more. Now along with our website, ellementry products are also available online for customers on these market platforms. We have a centralized warehouse and a robust management system. Our organisation matrix is designed in such a way that all the departments are well connected and coordinated with the supply and logistic departments. We have three logistic partners who are among the best in the market," Ayush signs off.

NICHE ALTERNATIVE

When GoodDot entered the market, it aimed to solve the moral dilemma of meat-eating animal lovers. Over the years, the brand's founders have kept a keen eye on plant-based alternatives to meat that were as tasty, yet healthier and more affordable.

HIGHLIGHTS

- GoodDot's QSR chain – GoodDo – has 12 locations and is the first and largest vegan QSR chain in India. The brand plans to expand the QSR chain to over 50 locations over the next year.
- This quarter onwards, it is expanding the export of its products to the US, EU and Australia.
- Over the next 3-6 months, GoodDot will enter the frozen food space as well.
- In the last four years, GoodDot's revenue has grown 100% year-on-year and its customer base has also expanded at 80% a year.

The lack of such alternates in the Indian market allowed GoodDot to introduce these vegan products with ease. Today, GoodDot offers plant-based substitutes to chicken and mutton, with others under development. In his final year of Chemical Engineering, year 2003, **GoodDot CEO, Abhishek Sinha** came across a Dutch Government-sponsored study on tissue culture meat. An animal lover himself, this was a revelation to him - the perfect solution to the moral dilemma of any meat-eating animal lover. The concept of a meat that did not involve killing an animal was fascinating to him. Sinha began keeping a tab on the space of meat alternatives from a consumer's perspective for close to a decade.

When he realized that India had far to go in the arena, he, along with his friend and GoodDot Co-founder Deepak Parihar, established the brand in 2016.

Market presence

Sailing through: Covid was a challenging time for the brand, its food outlets called GoodDO operational in Udaipur, Mumbai, and Kathmandu were affected because of lockdown and they had to slow down their expansion. However, Covid helped their packaged products business a lot. Since the brand operated a food business they could continue their factory operations even during the peak of the pandemic. The COVID outbreak also created a lot of awareness around health and more and more people started looking for plant-based meat solutions. In fact, the brand doubled their sales during this period.

"We are continuously developing new products to meet consumer needs. Some exciting new products are going to be launched soon. To increase our brand visibility, we have onboarded Indian Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra as brand ambassador. Recently we launched an ad featuring Neeraj and GoodDo the goat. This ad went viral with millions of views across different social media platforms and created a lot of buzzes. We are tying up with some of the largest National Retail chains to take our products closer to the consumers. Online sales are also one of our focus areas. We have recently, entered into a partnership with Swiggy, Instamart to roll across 17 cities in India where our products can be delivered to consumers in 20-30 minutes. We are getting very good traction on our own website and also on Amazon India. As a team, we are deploying the latest performance marketing solutions to really increase our online sales," Sinha mentions.

Customer-centric approach with technology support

Making it agile: Using the latest performance marketing tools the brand is streamlining and boosting their online business. Having a good ERP system along with a warehouse management system helps to coordinate the production, logistics, and supply. On the e-commerce front, rge brand is also deploying CRM tools to have a better engagement with their clients. "It has been an exciting learning for the team to establish the omnichannel

> WE HAVE PARTNERED WITH NATIONAL LEVEL DISTRIBUTORS WITH A STRONG LOGISTICS BACKEND. THERE ARE DIFFERENT PARTNERS FOR SHELF-STABLE AND FROZEN LINES. MOST OF THE INSTITUTIONAL DELIVERIES ARE TAKEN CARE BY THE DISTRIBUTORS AND THEIR LOGISTICS TEAM.
>
> **– Abhishek Sinha**
> CEO, GoodDot

experience. Initially, we had been present in brick-and-mortar stores. Now the online presence has been increased and the focus is to deepen the online footprint apart from diversifying the offline presence. The awareness of plant-based meat has increased multifold in the last couple of years. This has helped us to reach more consumers than ever," Sinha adds.

A good CRM system helps in a good post-purchase experience for the consumers. Optimizing the information and the consumer journey on the brand's website is also a priority area. Based on customer feedback, the optimization of the website is an ongoing feature.

Supply chain & fulfillment

Connecting the dots: Sinha further continues, "We have partnered with National level distributors with a strong logistics backend. There are different partners for shelf-stable and frozen lines. Most of the institutional deliveries are taken care by the Distributors and their logistics team. On the retail side, the fulfillment is being carried out by the national level logistics partner or in some cities a local last-mile delivery partner. Since many of our products are shelf-stable at ambient temperature, they do not require cold chain storage and logistics. This helps us a lot to expand our footprint to all across India including semi-urban and rural areas. Thus, we have one of the largest serviceable geographies in the plant-based meat category".

In the early days, GoodDot founders struggled with distribution. To overcome the hurdle, they partnered with RCM, a direct selling company with 7,500 stores. This got the brand access to the villages and towns of India, and gave them the opportunity of large-scale operations from the get-go. Today, GoodDot has an extensive presence online as well through its own website and Amazon. Sinha says, "One of our biggest strengths is that most of our products are shelf-stable at room temperature, which makes logistics and fulfilment easier and more efficient. The same convenience helps us with easy international logistics through dedicated country partners across several geographies."

HAPPY SNACKING

Happilo is a brand known for its exclusive range of nuts, dried fruits, organic seeds, dry roasted snacks, trial mixes, festive gift hampers and more.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The brand has raised INR 100 crore in 2021 as a part of series A & INR 200 crore in 2022 as a part of Series B funding. They are also aiming to launch the Happilo IPO in future.
- The brand has a robust presence across marketplaces and can be found in Amazon, Flipkart, Snapdeal, Nykaa , Bigbasket, Jio Mart, Blinkit, Swiggy , Zepto, Deal Share, Milkbasket, Brand Store & many more.
- To stay connected and close to customers, Happilo sends newsletters, SMS & WhatsApp messages with offers and communication from time to time. Recently, they have created 'Happilo Wallet' to encourage consumers to shop more.

Vikas D Nahar, Founder, Happilo International Pvt Ltd comes from a humble background. His father was a farmer largely involved in the cultivation of coffee pepper & cardamom. Coming from this background he always wanted to build for India & Bharat. Post his MBA in marketing from SCMHRD in Pune (2010), Vikas aspired to build brands in the FMCG food space. That's when he realised the need gap existing in the dry fruits and gourmet snacking market and eventually laid the foundation for Happilo to pioneer a change within this category in India.

Retail presence & optimization

Growing health consciousness: Dry fruits are immensely popular the world over for the health benefits they offer. Most of these are high in nutrients, such as minerals and antioxidants. Furthermore, owing to the pandemic and customer behaviour shifts, people are now more conscious about health and are trying to add healthy food to all their meals. "Today, the healthy snacking market is worth more than 5 billion dollars and until a few years back this was dominated by traditional players. However, things have changed and now we are seeing a lot of new age brands emerging in this healthy snacks category. As every other entrepreneur, I had faced several issues at the initial stage like entry barriers of modern trade, listing of the products on e-commerce platforms, cash flow crunch etc. But to penetrate deeper into the market, we have started listing our brand on eminent e-commerce platforms Like Amazon & Flipkart," Vikas D Nahar, Founder, Happilo International Pvt Ltd mentions.

Overcoming a list of financial and operational challenges, Happilo today has spread its reach far and wide and is one of the most loved brands in this category too.

Supply chain and fulfillment

Streamlining operations: There is great scope for branded healthy snacks & dry fruits in the market. Ensuring the availability & accessibility of the products to the end consumer at the right price point is the crux of the success, the Happilo team mentions. Product assortment & penetration is the second stage of the business, they highlight. To this end they have set up a robust system by implementing SAP. "We are trying to open multiple warehouses so that we can be as close to our consumers. Today in the era of quick commerce, customers are not willing to wait for his/ her deliveries. We are also integrating new age Order Management Solutions to simplify the logistics & ensure faster fulfillment to the customers," Vikas adds.

In the near future the brand is planning to set up one more fully automated plant. Similarly, they have implemented SAP Business one for smoothing the entire operations. They are working on WMS & OMS tools to improve the logistic challenges. They are also working on marketing automation, cloud call management & other tech-based operations to run the show more efficiently & effectively. Vikas mentions that operating

> WE BELIEVE IN THE 'FARM TO FORK' CONCEPT, HENCE WE HAVE DEVELOPED MULTIPLE PARTNERS ACROSS THE GLOBE FOR SOURCING THE RIGHT PRODUCTS DIRECTLY FROM THE FINEST FARMS/ PROCESSING CENTERS & ALSO HAVE INVESTED IN BUILDING THE IN-HOUSE R&D, PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT TEAM.
>
> **– Vikas D Nahar**
> Founder, Happilo International Pvt. Ltd.

within the D2C space website readiness, stock fulfillment, order processing mechanism, and providing a seamless customer journey experience to every customer is very critical. "We have a 'Zero Question Ask Policy' for our customers in case they raise any concern about our products. We are also aggressively working on customer retention, so that we can reduce LTV. Happilo Club & Happilo Care are the best examples of CRL & CLM strategy we have put in place," Vikas adds.

Customer approach

Being focused: When talking about creating a customer-centric approach for the brand, Vikas mentions, "Our approach is always to connect with the customers' requirements & serve them what they are looking for from us, rather than just offering them something that we feel is right. We provide maximum shelf life to our product via a fully automated plant process. We do sourcing from across the world to serve the best of the handpicked nuts to our consumers. We are facilitating women empowerment, 90% of the factory is powered by women. The entire production process has no human intervention & is untouched by hand. All our products are dry roasted & non fried offering crunchy & tasty experience with all the goodness of dry fruits. We have also launched a lot of innovative flavors inspired by cuisines across the globe. Few of the flavours are Peri-Peri, Jamaican Passion, Time & Pepper, Delhi Chat, Nimbu Pudina, Italian Tomato, Thai Chilly & more. Happilo products have Zero Cholesterol, Zero Trans-fat, Gluten Free, Non-GMO, Zero Preservatives, Rich in Antioxidants & Fibers".

Operational since the last 5-6 years, the brand at every turn works towards providing best of the class dry fruit range to their customers. "We try to innovate with flavours, blends, and ingredients to give best in class healthy snacking options to consumers that are not only healthy but also tasty. We believe in the 'farm to fork' concept, hence we have developed multiple partners across the globe for sourcing the right products directly from the finest farms/ processing centers & also have invested in building the in-house R&D, Product development team," Vikas sums up.

ONE OF A KIND

Pune-based Moonshine Meadery is Asia's first meadery. Childhood buddies and founders Rohan Rehani and Nitin Vishwas started the company in 2018, with the aim of bringing back the oldest alcoholic beverage, mead, made from natural honey.

moonshine

HIGHLIGHTS

- During Wave 1, when business practically stopped, the brand took permission and became perhaps the only winery in India making WHO-grade hand sanitizers. Over the course of 9 months, they made over ~10,000 Liters of sanitizers and donated >40% to the local authorities. This allowed them to have a purpose and keep capital in rotation.
- They have also doubled down on the innovation engine and created the Grilled Pineapple mead and ran a label design crowdsourcing campaign around it. Over 500 graphic artists took part in this exercise. This mead has now become a favourite with their consumers.
- In January 2016, the brand took up an old cement factory in Pune to set up India's first meadery. The first bottle from Moonshine Meadery was ready in February 2018.

Moonshine Meadery in Pune is bringing the world's oldest beverage 'Mead', which is an alcoholic beverage made by fermenting honey with water, sometimes with fruits, spices, and grains, to the subcontinent. Apart from manufacturing their flagship range that has flavours like apple cider, and coffee, they also operate Asia's first mead lab where they combine the most random flavours to create unique and delicious concoctions. Some of their experimental hits include Guava Chilli, Salted Kokam, Bourbon Oaked Apple, and Chocolate Orange. And what's more? They also source their own honey and are now selling it as part of their Moonshine Honey Project!

Retail presence & optimization

Riding on the wave: Pandemic took quite a toll on the hospitality sector and the alcobev space have had to either stop or slow down business during the three waves. "As alcohol is a highly regulated category, unlike most e-commerce brands, we do not have the opportunity to drive online sales. Further, our subcategory [beer, meads and RTDs (Ready To Drinks)] is typically consumed chilled. This means that there is a need to stock the bottles in the 'family refrigerator', which still continues to remain a challenge in many homes because of the taboo around home drinking. Also, during the pandemic, most people preferred drinking spirits over beer and wine, since they wanted to avoid drinking cold beverages," **Nitin Vishwas, Co-Founder, Moonshine** Meadery notes.

He continues, "Our industry (alcobev) doesn't lend itself to digitization and omnichannel retail because of strict government regulations. However, as a direct need of liquidating some of our raw material (honey), we launched the Moonshine Honey Project (MHP), where we're sourcing honey from our own bee boxes and retailing it directly to consumers. With MHP, we soon realized the power of the story and slowly expanded our range of honey, but tapping into our own boxes today we boast of many unifloral honeys like Sidr, Mustard, Acacia and Rosewood. Over the course of the next few years, which we retail now from our own web store, we are looking at growing this business vertical with a dedicated team."

The brand's USP is the ingredients that they constantly experiment with, to bring fresh varieties of meads that take your palate on a soothing journey while you sit back, relax and lower your inhibitions! Innovation and ingredients, which are absolutely natural form the strong base of ideas for the brand and they explore this backbone to concoct the right brew.

Supply chain and fulfillment

Quick recipe: Nitin highlights here talking from an industry point of view, "One of the bigger reforms which happened in the alcobev sector was the home delivery of

> “OUR INDUSTRY (ALCOBEV) DOESN’T LEND ITSELF TO DIGITIZATION AND OMNICHANNEL RETAIL BECAUSE OF STRICT GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS. HOWEVER, AS A DIRECT NEED OF LIQUIDATING SOME OF OUR RAW MATERIAL (HONEY), WE LAUNCHED THE MOONSHINE HONEY PROJECT (MHP), WHERE WE’RE SOURCING HONEY FROM OUR OWN BEE BOXES AND RETAILING IT DIRECTLY TO CONSUMERS.
>
> **–Nitin Vishwas**
> Co-Founder, Moonshine

alcohol. This allowed smaller brands like ours to redirect consumers to the retail stores stocking our products, thus bridging the Width of Distribution (WOD) gap which is usually the toughest challenge for a young brand to achieve. We set up a mini helpline for customers to call us with availability issues and in return, we redirected the request and customer details to retailers who helped fulfill the order. Over the course of one year, we helped over 10,000 customers across Mumbai and Pune find a storekeeper who could deliver meads to them, which has helped improve same-store sales growth and also helped us understand our consumers better. This also allowed for better targeting of consumers on social media and helped not only recover lost sales but actually grow during the pandemic”.

The brand’ sold its first Moonshine Mead from an outlet at Haiko Mall in Powai. Today, it has tie-ups with Pizza by the Bay, Nature’s Basket, Smoke House Deli and Barstock Exchange. In the case of Moonshine, fulfillment is done by retailers in states where home delivery is permitted or it’s finally down to consumers’ need to visit a store to pick up a bottle. What’s working well across all markets is the rapid transition from D-type stores to premium walk-ins. This has led to more women buyers and allows for newer brands to be discovered more organically.

The place where they have an opportunity to differentiate is with their sourcing of honey, their principal raw material. Rohan Rehani (Co-Founder) and Akshay Borse (Head Beekeeper) are both trained bee-keepers and actively work on identifying honey sources via their own boxes or via their internal network of beekeepers. Some of the honey they use to make meads are re-packaged as Moonshine Honey Project and this serves as a unique distinction vis-a-vis their competition. Very few alcobev brands can package their raw material and allow the consumer to taste it and judge for themselves the premiumness built into the product.

PAPER POWER

myPAPERCLIP was started in 2013 with a desire to create high quality, minimal, functional and durable notebooks, notepads, journals and desk essentials. Today, they make 300+ kinds of products catering to a wide demographic and types of use.

myPAPERCLIP™

HIGHLIGHTS

- Most of the brand's paper is sourced from various countries in Europe.
- myPAPERCLIP relies on a SaaS platform to process orders and have API integrations with courier partners to make the supply chain very seamless.
- At the backend, they have their own manufacturing so it's easy to have near real time inventory management.
- The brand is available at 150+ retail stores in India and aboard and across multiple channels including – bookstores, regional stationers, travel retail, grocery chains.

With minimalism and great design aesthetic at the core, myPAPERCLIP products are appreciated by corporate professionals, students, designers and homemakers. Today the brand has 1 Million+ active yearly users, who love to cherish what the brand brings for them. There is truly something for everyone!

Retail presence & optimization

The right mindset: "At myPAPERCLIP, we continue to be obsessed with quality and keep ourselves close to what the customer wants. This takes time and can't be achieved overnight. But, once the customer starts demanding your products at the retail stores or searching for it online, you can be sure of high repeat customer rates, lower marketing spends, lower discounts and higher EBITA margins. In my view, this is what creates a long lasting brand," **Aashish Batra - Co-Founder - myPAPERCLIP** mentions.

Aashish admits that if you increase the quality of a product by 10x, listen to what the customer wants and offer it at the right price, it sells. "I believe you can create a niche and capture market share for any product if you stick to this rule. Look at old examples like Asian Paints – which has the highest market share in the paints sector and yet offers the most expensive products in the sector. Or more recent examples of BOAT offering great looking and sounding products that the customer always wanted but could not get," he adds.

Supply chain and fulfillment

Orders on time: The brand works with the best courier agencies and offers 2 day delivery for all orders shipped via their own website. For marketplaces, they work with some of the leading distributors that offer same/next day deliveries to metros. All the back-end, communication to customer – order confirmation, shipment details etc are automated via the SaaS platform.

Further, they do not run their own retail stores, but work with distributors and retailers. Every retail store caters to a certain captive audience near the store. With a few years of experience, the brand is aware of the yearly sale of their products via the stores and with a certain degree of confidence anticipate the demand for every store and distributor. This helps improve inventory planning and order fulfillment.

Customer service

Looking closely: The start of the pandemic came with a lot of uncertainty. Small start-ups and big companies alike did not know what to expect and how to deal with the situation. But at a macro level the brand mentions that they anticipated that Covid-19 was here to stay, at least for the short run (1-2 years). They also knew that the pandemic will lead to disruptions in the retail sector and change customer buying behaviours. For omnichannel brands to be successful, they needed to re-rethink on how brands reach out to customers. With this simple

> YOU CAN CREATE A NICHE AND CAPTURE MARKET SHARE FOR ANY PRODUCT IF YOU STICK TO THIS RULE. LOOK AT OLD EXAMPLES LIKE ASIAN PAINTS – WHICH HAS THE HIGHEST MARKET SHARE IN THE PAINTS SECTOR AND YET OFFERS THE MOST EXPENSIVE PRODUCTS IN THE SECTOR.
>
> **–Aashish Batra**
> Co-Founder - myPAPERCLIP

premise, they knew that they need to pivot fast and make decisions to ensure business continuity in case they need to sustain the growth or even grow exponentially. Putting its processes to the existing system made it easier, faster and more effective to pivot faster than they anticipated.

Fortunately for myPAPERCLIP, their far sighted long term approach with laser focus worked well with their customer approaches and they actually grew by ~2x year-on-year since 2020. To make their model scalable and avoid any human errors, they rely extensively on technology. They are supported by external tech partners on a SaaS model. The technology works with their ops, inventory management and finance team. Every online and offline order management, fulfillment, invoice generation, AWB allocation, invoicing happens via the tech platform. The platform has further API integrations with courier partners, marketplaces and financial systems to make the process seamless, efficient and less susceptible towards human errors.

"Further, we work with external digital marketing agencies on a SaaS model where we use their platforms that use AI and ML to optimize sales targeting and budget allocations. Our story has been somewhat different from the template followed by current startups/brands. We started off predominantly as a retail brand with presence across major book and stationery stores across the country. But since 2018 we were also experimenting with marketplaces and selling via our own website. Given our exposure to digital pre-pandemic and the exponential growth and comfort of people shopping online, our digital trajectory actually grew exponentially in 2020. We are now experimenting with using unique ways to expand our omnichannel presence leveraging everything digital," Aashish notes.

HOLISTIC WELLNESS

Establishing a distinct identity in the consumer health segment, OZiva is India's first clean label wellness brand that offers plant based l products along with a fully digitized ecosystem intended to enable 100mn+ people live a healthier, and better life.

HIGHLIGHTS

- OZiva has crossed an annual revenue run rate of 100 crores INR.
- It is the first wellness brand in India to be certified clean and receive the Purity Award and Pesticide Free certificate from the US-based Clean Label Project.
- The brand has roped in Deepika Padukone as its Brand Ambassador.
- In 2021 they were associated with Khatron ke Khiladi as nutrition partner, Big Boss Hindi 15, Big Boss Telugu.
- Recently, they have raised $12 million in Series B funding.
- With a digital first approach, the brand is now expanding its retail touch points

Founded in 2016 by IIT & INSEAD Alumni, Aarti Gill along with Mihir Gadani, a Biotechnologist & Bioinformatician, OZiva has built an ecosystem that brings the best of phytonutrients (plant based), efficacy and an instantaneous digital ecosystem together. OZiva is an omnichannel wellness brand where people can pick-up a product from anywhere and consult a human expert digitally.

Retail presence & optimization

Digital first approach: OZiva is centered on a resolute and efficient digital ecosystem that leverages technology and content that in a nutshell empowers and encourages people to lead healthy lives, by providing them with effective practical solutions to meet the everyday rigors of the modern world. OZiva seeks to tackle the erroneous consequences of living in a modern advanced society, such as lack of nutrition, unhealthy food choices, adulteration, toxicity, contaminants etc. by enabling users with instant, expert consultation and resolution of their health and well-being related queries. Through OZiva's expert ecosystem, people get the right guidance on what kind of products would work best for them as well as the kind of lifestyle changes they should make to improve their fitness, immunity, skin health, hair health & many more concerns.

"The past two years of the pandemic, we all have become very agile and ready to think on our feet. Time to time we did face certain hurdles however we have been able to tackle these effectively by creating inventory reserves, expanding & regionalizing the supply network. In 2020, when the pandemic hit for the first time with complete lockdown for a few months and businesses gone to a standstill, it was extremely tough for everyone. However post the first wave, we all (businesses and consumers alike) have slowly and steadily adapted to the new normal. Our processes had to undergo multiple tweaks and iterations to ensure that we are able to cater to the changing consumer landscape," **Aarti Gill, Co-founder, OZiva** mentions.

The increased awareness on health and wellness worked in the brand's favour and they were able to cater to the demand from consumers for products focussed on immunity, plant based vitamins and minerals in addition to launching 2 new categories under OZiva, OZiva Clean Beauty and OZiva Kids.

Supply chain and fulfillment

Agile and ready: "With multiple SAAS companies emerging in the logistics space, warehousing and inventory management have been simplified. Scaling of warehouses was easier for us due to such partners. It's very important to give the best experience to our consumers by faster delivery which is possible only if you have a fulfillment center near the customer. Being a D2C brand our presence has always been strong online even before the pandemic. Consumers are using a multichannel approach to make a purchase. For example, they check online reviews, then compare prices on Ecommerce platforms and may end up buying from an offline store. Hence

> PRODUCT HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE CORE OF OUR OFFERING. WHAT WE CONSUME AND APPLY HAVE A HUGE IMPACT ON OUR OVERALL WELL BEING AND THIS HAS BEEN THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND ALL OUR BUSINESS STRATEGIES.
>
> **–Aarti Gill**
> Co-founder, OZiva

> BEING A D2C BRAND OUR PRESENCE HAS ALWAYS BEEN STRONG ONLINE, EVEN BEFORE THE PANDEMIC. CONSUMERS ARE USING A MULTICHANNEL APPROACH TO MAKE A PURCHASE.
>
> **–Mihir Gadani**
> Co-founder, OZiva

as a brand it's important to provide multiple touch points for the consumers. We have a presence in over 2000 stores in the country and are looking to grow 4 times by the end of the year. The response has been great from the cities where we have our offline presence as well," **Mihir Gadani, Co-founder, OZiva**

OZiva is a INR 100+ cr brand that has grown at a 140% CAGR in the last 3 years on the back of new categories and building a strong technology & content based ecosystem. Considering OZiva's diverse product base, their scope and the allied services offered by the brand along with its unique expertise and insight into the domain, it aims to capture a significant portion of this high potential market by offering a multi-dimensional, holistic health & wellbeing approach.

Customer service

Product centric: "Product has always been the core of our offering. What we consume and apply have a huge impact on our overall well being and this has been the driving force behind all our business strategies. In the last 2 years, we have developed new & innovative plant derived ingredients & have more than 30 clinical studies backing our products. We want to empower individuals to be healthier and better in every way with clean and plant based products. From becoming the first nutrition brand in the country to be certified clean (by US CLP) to launching holistic clean beauty solutions, our product portfolio enables clean and holistic living for consumers. We have focussed on building an agile supply and logistics system to ensure that we are able to cater to consumers from all around. Along with having a centralized hub we also have regional hubs to ensure smoother and faster fulfillment for online channels. Offline, we are slowly expanding and hoping to increase our footprint across 8000+ stores by the end of 2022," Aarti adds

EXPERT TOUCH

R for Rabbit, a name synonymous to quality & safety, delivers adorable baby products to make parenting easy & joyful.

R for Rabbit®
The Amazing Baby Company

HIGHLIGHTS

- R for Rabbit has been named the Most Valued Mother & Child Brand of 2020-21
- R for Rabbit has raised ₹ 40 crore from private equity firm Xponentia Capital Partners. The brand plans to strengthen the scale, distribution and operations in the domestic market, for enhancing the existing product portfolio and for introducing new categories of products.
- R for Rabbit has a pan-India presence and a diverse range of baby products, including baby gear, ride-ons, nursing, activity and bathing toys, among others.

Founded in 2014 by husband-wife duo Kunal Popat and Kinjal Popat, R for Rabbit focuses on developing safe baby products that meet international quality guidelines at accessible price points. With Safety, utmost Quality and Innovative designs, the brand has created a strong community of 1.5 Million happy customers. Apart from manufacturing the best products, they also believe in providing a seamless customer care service. This is how R for Rabbit strives to serve the most amazing products and be the most 'The Amazing Baby Company'.

Retail presence & optimization

Quality approach: In the last seven years, we have successfully managed to create a strong base of 1.5 million loyal customers. We have also developed a deep understanding of the baby products market and have been consistently delivering safe and innovative baby products resulting in the trust among the new generation of 'smart parents'," said **Kunal Popat, founder, R for Rabbit.**

The company is expected to clock an annualized revenue run rate of around ₹100 crore in the current financial year (FY 22) through online and offline channels. So, when pointing out the ways in which the brand has rose over the hurdles of the pandemic, Kunal says "Several experts and research studies have stated that the pandemic's extreme disruption has resulted in an immediate need for businesses in India and worldwide to make their supply chains more robust, innovative, and integrated. The supply chain disruption affected the industry and caused a lot of stress. Several companies across the country faced a similar problem due to the pandemic".

Supply chain & fulfillment

Keeping it agile: "Recently, for the first time, a McKinsey survey identified supply chain disruption as the most significant danger to growth for both their companies and their countries' economies — higher than the pandemic, labour shortages, geopolitical instability, war, and domestic strife. Ideally, we are an online (D2C) first brand, the brand's majority revenues are 90% online. So, the pandemic did affect our business. However, we slowly had a supply chain in place once the market started operating in the first wave," Kunal highlighted.

R for Rabbit is currently using Unicommerce as a platform and soon going regional on warehouses for website fulfillment. Selling online has enabled countless businesses and brands to grow while generating profits. Like every other business strategy, there are numerous advantages, and the potential benefits of e-commerce can assist one to excel. They couldn't agree more and have prepared some data to highlight the benefits and assist them internally in making business decisions.

The brand is onboarding the 3PL services for the organization, which will help them with their B2B and B2C fulfillment faster. With the growth of the online retail marketplace, various third-party order fulfillment services and 3PLs that specialize in integrating multiple order channels have emerged. Understanding B2B and B2C order fulfillment is critical for any online business owner. However, by

> WE ENSURE WE HAVE PROPER PRODUCT LAUNCHING AND GO-TO-MARKET STRATEGY FOR BUSINESS OPERATIONS. IN ADDITION, WE DO IN DEPTH RESEARCH AND ENSURE WE HAVE SUFFICIENT ASSETS CREATED BEFORE LAUNCH. LATELY, WE HAVE STARTED COLLABORATING WITH CELEBRITIES FOR BRANDING & MARKETING.
>
> **– Kunal Popat**
> Founder, R for Rabbit

partnering with a 3PL, you can delegate all operational details to them, allowing you to focus on other parts of your supply chain and essential business objectives.

Customer approach

Flexible ordering: A practical approach to raising brand awareness, commanding attention, and earning followers on social media, celebrities in advertising or partnerships boost business when accompanied by a powerful marketing strategy. "We ensure we have proper product launching and go-to-market strategy for business operations. In addition, we do in-depth research and ensure we have sufficient assets created before launch. Lately, we have started collaborating with celebrities for branding & marketing. Our company does not have an Omnichannel rather multi-channel approach. The advantage of an omnichannel supply chain model has various benefits, including enhancing the customer experience, including shopping through any channel, picking up in-store, and having products delivered to the customer's house or other places. Shippers can personalize their shopping experiences to meet each customer's demands," Kunal highlights.

E-commerce sales continue to grow as a percentage of total retail sales, but nothing has accelerated the expansion of online shopping like the arrival of a global epidemic. "COVID-19 prompted e-commerce sales to rise in 2020, owing mainly to retailers closing their doors and racing to set up an online store to stay in business. We use a transport aggregator to see the transit time, costing and best service provider in the respective pin code, making our work easy," he sums up. Infact, keeping the customer and their versatile needs in mind the company has launched its first baby diapers named Feather Diapers - the next-gen diaper that breathes and Feather Water wipes. Additionally, to ease the daily struggles of mothers or caretakers to dispose of stale diapers, the brand has also forayed into India's first diaper bins by named Hygo Bin.

SCORING CUSTOMERS

Skoodle Play is a flagship brand of Stone Sapphire India Pvt Ltd, and consists of a full range of Infant, Pre-school, Plush, Art & Craft, Armoury Role Play, Vehicles, Indoor Board Games, Outdoor & Indoor Sports toys for children mostly from the age group of 0-18 years.

HIGHLIGHTS

- To be able to create a notable omnichannel brand presence Skoddle is being focused on digital or the traditional offline channels. Having to service both, requires massive talent and financial bandwidth and the brand is focused on fulfilling this at every level.
- The focus on creating digital is not merely a website creation. It has multiple back-end operations that need real time attention to ensure "trains run on time".
- Innovations made in technology such as virtual payments, hyper-local logistics, analytics-driven customer engagement, and digital advertising are factors that have been triggering the industry growth that is high on the brand's agenda.

Skoodle Play believes in offering premium play experience to cherish the childhood, it so well deserves and nourishes its age and beyond with a memory of a lifetime. All the brand's products are designed & developed keeping in mind that good and effective learning is only possible if it happens in an interactive teaching environment.

Retail presence & optimization

Shifting gear: The toy business, like many industries, has transformed dramatically since the onset of the pandemic. "To be able to grasp the enormity of the massive shift from a physical brick and mortar model to an online channel was a challenge, not only for us, but all brands. While making the digital leap seemed easy, the primary challenge was to comprehend the initial steps of setting up shop, understanding the requisites of shifting to digital, troubleshooting and website creation to name a few. The key to the alterations we have seen relate to the way the consumers' values have shifted owing to the pandemic outbreak. Our major challenge was to create and upgrade extensions to our prevailing digital presence to multiple shopping windows. To achieve a smooth online functioning, we have enhanced our online structure investment in systems, servers, UI/UX and will be creating mechanisms to support more traffic, irregular and fluctuating buyer journeys and enhanced buyer say in product presentation, pricing, and availability," **Shobhit Singh, Director of Stone Sapphire India Pvt. Ltd** mentions.

Now more than ever, the brand understands that they need to be extremely agile in responding to change – while putting the end-users experience at the forefront. Necessity is, of course, the mother of innovation, and inventive responses to modifications in consumer behaviour patterns have been key this year, and Skoodle looks forward to taking off driven by changing demands.

Supply chain & fulfillment

Customer on point: To establish strong linkage with the audience, Skoodle plans to emphasize on digital adoption by strengthening their online operations. In order to refine the perceptibility of their own ecommerce website they have employed advanced technological features that will systematize communication with customers and create supply chain flexibility. Having an exceptional social media presence, they have now enhanced their ecommerce portal to 400 SKUs offered to customers all over India. Strategies like emphasizing on eco-friendly packaging, a 24 hours' order dispatch policy and matching swift deliveries across all pin codes have facilitated in defining the business operations to stay afloat amidst such challenging times.

In order to make operations seamless and versatile, at Skoodle they have adopted futuristic technologies like systems that ensure a lag free browsing experience on Mobile and desktop, convenience of top notch navigation, user-friendly tab and options, search options customized with

> WHILE MAKING THE DIGITAL LEAP SEEMED EASY, THE PRIMARY CHALLENGE WAS TO COMPREHEND THE INITIAL STEPS OF SETTING UP SHOP, UNDERSTANDING THE REQUISITES OF SHIFTING TO DIGITAL, TROUBLESHOOTING AND WEBSITE CREATION TO NAME A FEW.
>
> **–Shobhit Singh**
> Director of Stone Sapphire India Pvt. Ltd

suggestions, best payment gateways and plenty of payment options for customer convenience. These factors offer evidence of the digital influence in the e-commerce ecosystem.

Customer approach

With technology support: To service the customers better the brand is looking to have a robust digital presence through strategic distribution partners. In the market for an e-commerce brand, every category has multiple websites options and presence. Maintaining a presence on other marketplaces such as Amazon, Flipkart, Firstcry, Meesho, Myntra, Cliq etc., along with the brands own website is going to be the norm now. As far as Skoodle is concerned, they don't have an exclusive store or brick and mortar retail presence. But the brand is tapping offline by having a presence in conventional General and Modern trade channels where-in it aims at creating an online presence with its strategic distribution partners. They are already into building the infrastructure for distribution partners, creating the due diligence mechanisms for them to ensure their market presence is not compromised, sales increase, and ultimately customers get a quicker and larger range of products to choose from nearby available points.

"Those who are positioned in proximity to the end-consumers win the delivery race and outperform. In order to uphold logistics and fulfilment, we have adopted to strategies like ensuring that proper billing operations are derived from order placement, installed quick pick and pay system, training the warehouse on real time dispatch consignment, ensuring it is picked by the delivery partners, maintaining ratings and rankings, keeping a tab on last mile channel: reporting mechanism, operation and control and lastly having on board a dedicated and skilled team. Embedding such advanced delivery solutions can help retailers meet the last-mile consumer expectations, thus bettering their experience," Shobhit adds.

FOR BETTER SLEEP

Sleepsia is a sleep-tech company. They leverage technology to improve sleep quality and offer products to correct sleeping patterns. Post funding of USD 2 million, the brand is coming up with tested and uniquely designed pillows.

SLEEPSIA
Say Hello To Sleep

HIGHLIGHTS

- Sleepsia since inception has served more than 200,000 consumers worldwide and generated profit in the first year itself.
- They have strengthened their product portfolio and also launched pillows for adequate back support for customers working from home or in the physical office, as they are equally responsible for a restful night's sleep.
- The brand has also expanded their international market reach and spread across the globe, including countries such as Canada, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Netherlands, and Poland.
- The brand is in the process of launching new pillow ranges, including baby pillows, microfiber pillows, pregnancy pillows, body pillows, and car cushions. At present, the brand is leveraging technology for three primary areas: production, delivery, and research. In addition, they are also gearing up to establish customer experience labs.

Sleepsia provides the best pillow with lots of options to choose from. The brand offers a wide range of high-end pillows. The product portfolio includes memory foam pillows, cervical pillows, contour-shaped pillows, half-moon pillows, lumbar support pillows, knee-support, and orthopedic pillows that may resolve many lifestyle problems. In fact, Sleepsia also offers contour-gel memory foam pillows that are even relied on by physiotherapists for patients suffering from cervical pain.

Retail presence & optimization

Innovating for growth: When talking about the pandemic and sailing through the tough times counting on new business, **Dheeraj Kapoor, Director, Sleepsia** says "We have created a very robust system to keep our business and processes aligned with the business objectives. Amid COVID-19, we worked hard to streamline the supply chain. At Sleepsia, we firmly believe in the 'Make in India' mission, and supply chain disruptions paved the way for us to shift manufacturing entirely in India. We invested significantly in research and customer experience labs. We were persistently doing brainstorming sessions at each level of the organization. We are delighted to share that, as compared to many other businesses and industries, we were relatively less impacted by the horrific pandemic. In fact, we are witnessing positive numbers in the current year's balance sheet".

In FY 2019-20, Sleepsia's revenue in the USA reached USD 2.7 million. In FY 2020-21, even though the pandemic hit the economy big time, their revenue was slightly below USD 2 million. If you combine the figures of the first two quarters in this financial year, they have already earned around USD 1.5 million. This year, they expect a revenue generation of USD 3-3.5 million in the US market and an estimated revenue cap of INR 6-7 crore for the Indian market. Kapoor continues, "During the pandemic, we strengthened our online presence and joined forces with several e-commerce platforms. We also worked on our website a bit and made it more consumer-friendly. To increase our online presence, we focused more on paid and influencer marketing because we already had a solid SEO strategy. Apart from sales, branding became a pivotal mission for us. That's why we've invested heavily in social media optimization/ marketing and influencer marketing. We've further improved and solidified our ranking in search engines. We're primarily targeting Google but have plans to connect with other search engines as well. Both our online and offline niche is all about resolving modern-age sleep problems. At Sleepsia, we aspire to correct the wrong sleeping patterns through our state-of-the-art pillow range and other sleep accessories".

Supply chain & fulfillment

Order on time: Kapoor when talking about fulfillment adds, "We are making use of technology to improve all our operational efficiencies. From studying sleeping patterns, setting up customer experience labs, creating products to strengthening supply chain operations, we use cutting-edge technologies and artificial

> DURING THE PANDEMIC, WE STRENGTHENED OUR ONLINE PRESENCE AND JOINED FORCES WITH SEVERAL E-COMMERCE PLATFORMS. WE ALSO WORKED ON OUR WEBSITE A BIT AND MADE IT MORE CONSUMER-FRIENDLY. TO INCREASE OUR ONLINE PRESENCE, WE FOCUSED MORE ON PAID AND INFLUENCER MARKETING BECAUSE WE ALREADY HAD A SOLID SEO STRATEGY. APART FROM SALES, BRANDING BECAME A PIVOTAL MISSION FOR US.
>
> **–Dheeraj Kapoor**
> Director, Sleepsia

intelligence everywhere. Undoubtedly, the advancements in technology have made the supply chain stronger. To have an edge above our contemporaries, we have adopted innovative and futuristic solutions. Automation tools like artificial intelligence have helped us lower operational costs, improve resource utilization and boost productivity. In addition, we have partnered with the best delivery partners to fulfill our requirements and provide our customers with a seamless shopping experience".

Customer service

Reviews galore: Till now, the brand's growth journey has been fabulous. They firmly believe in organic growth. Sleepsia has incorporated influencer marketing in their digital strategy to attain steady growth. Furthermore, to gain maximum awareness, the brand focuses on all forms of marketing, such as SMO, display marketing, and advertising. In 2020, the global market for digital content was valued at around USD 367.1 billion. This number is expected to proliferate at a rate of 12.4%, reaching USD 664.9 billion by 2027. Owing to this trend, they are also exploring different types of digital advertising methodologies. Kapoor adds here, "We believe in the Indian government's highly-ambitious and constructive mission 'Make in India'. Sleepsia products are developed, assembled, and manufactured in India. During the pandemic period, especially in 2020, we witnessed major supply chain disruptions. This is still a huge obstacle for us. With the demand increasing exponentially, addressing the need for smooth and convenient supply chain management is on our priority list. Already, we are in the final stage of setting up our manufacturing facilities in India. This will effectively address our supply chain requirements efficiently and speedily".

GROOMING IT RIGHT

The Man Company's objective has always been to formulate skin, hair and body care products of the purest and the finest quality.

THE MAN COMPANY

HIGHLIGHTS

- In the pre-pandemic era, The Man Company's 55% of sales were through online touch points, and 45% was from offline sales. However, with the pandemic, these dynamics have somewhat changed. The online share has increased considerably and reached up to 70%.
- The Man Company boasts of having 3000+ touch points across the country on GT & MT (Hypermarket, Retail chains, Pharma, etc.) along with more than 40 Exclusive Brand Outlets (EBOs).
- Entirely free of harmful chemicals and enthusiastically infused with premium essential oils, the brand has devised a product range that is meticulous about their customer's aesthetic improvement.

Beyond just giving men a bevy of class-leading products that the brand feels are beneficial for every man's aesthetic improvement, they are meticulous about the ingredients they use. The Man Company's entire product range is free of harmful chemicals and infused with handpicked natural ingredients and premium essential oils. The Man Company was conceived in honour of the modern men who look and feel their very best. The brand believes that becoming a gentleman is a journey rather than a destination. And we've resolved to accompany all aspiring gentlemen to be their constant companion. Since inception, they've been creating wonders by the grace of nature to offer the world with the best in age and class of grooming.

Retail presence & optimization

The need gap: Founded in 2015, The Man Company is the brainchild of Dr. Parvesh Bareja, Hitesh Dhingra and Bhisham Bhateja. There were hundreds of brands catering to women when it came to personal care and grooming, but for men, there was hardly anything. This made the brand realize that there's an opportunity to create niche and experiential products for modern-age men. With the closure of salons and beauty/skincare retail outlets due to the sudden onset of the global pandemic, nearly 90% of the grooming industry market was closed in March and April 2020. However, since reopening in May, the brand has witnessed a significant influx of demand. Moreover, during the first wave, the brand observed that people searched for DIY products online, so they decided to make the most of this space. The Man Company eventually launched some high-octane DIY products using their existing range, including face care and pedicure.

"It is crucial to note that online channels contribute around 70% of our total revenue. Apart from our official website, most of the business comes from four leading marketplaces — Amazon, Flipkart, Nykaa, Myntra etc. We expect online channels to contribute 60% of our total revenue by the end of 2022, while 40% are forecasted to come from offline channels," **Hitesh Dhingra, Founder, The Man Company** comments. The company started as a digitally-native brand and has since expanded to offline retail. The Man Company was not present in hypermarkets and supermarkets until a year back, but that has completely changed now. The Man Company, which gets a large portion of its sales from online channels, has already signed up with 50+ partners in just the Modern Trade segment.

Supply chain & fulfillment

Structure for change: Hitesh added, "To ensure we are prepared to cater to the fast-evolving demands of modern-age gentlemen, The Man Company has adopted several tech-based methodologies. Foremost, to keep our inventory, stock management, delivery, and order fulfillment on point, we are leveraging FIFO (First In, First Out) method. We have also automated order allocation based on inventory availability across regional warehouses. In addition, to make certain the smooth flow of order tracking and fulfillment, we are taking assistance

from top-notch software available in the domain".

At The Man Company, the team has also curated a unique customer reliability index to predict return orders and classify customers as per risk tiers to save on two-way logistics. They are also harnessing the power of regional fulfillment to reduce the total turnaround time, optimize logistics costs and enhance customer experience. In addition, for automatic offline order processing, they are taking assistance from a B2B trade management platform that seamlessly integrates SOs, Superstockists, Distributors, and retailers on a single platform. Since its inception, the growth trajectory of The Man Company has been immensely gratifying. And one of the biggest reasons behind their significant growth has been rapid digitization and the brand's ability to leverage cutting-edge technology. Today, they have a robust offline presence across the country. In fact, they also have several regional warehouses in multiple cities across India, which ultimately reduces TAT.

> "IT IS CRUCIAL TO NOTE THAT ONLINE CHANNELS CONTRIBUTE AROUND 70% OF OUR TOTAL REVENUE. APART FROM OUR OFFICIAL WEBSITE, MOST OF THE BUSINESS COMES FROM FOUR LEADING MARKETPLACES — AMAZON, FLIPKART, NYKAA, MYNTRA ETC.
>
> **–Hitesh Dhingra**
> Founder, The Man Company

Customer service

Conversing with the customer: When talking about the brand's plans to connect with customers Hitesh continues, "Our plan was simple and straightforward. We established multiple regional fulfillment centers across India. We also leveraged new-age digitally advanced technologies to handle our logistics and fulfillment aspects smoothly. In this context, we harnessed futuristic automation tools and brought all stakeholders together on a single B2B trade management platform. At The Man Company, we use an automated process to ensure we do not face issues such as overstocking, shortage of stock, or no stock. This modernistic approach makes certain that we forecast demand and procurement well in advance and plan accordingly. In addition, we have also developed regional inventory allocation across e-commerce, marketplace channels and offline channels. These steps make our supply chain more effective and efficient".

ERGONOMIC SOLUTIONS

The Sleep Company is India's first company, which brings to the customer mattresses that are made with innovative SmartGRID adaptive technology that adapts to your body shape. The 'Grid' will be firm under back to give spine support, however it will cuddle body curvatures like hips & shoulders just like it cuddles those tiny eggs under so much pressure.

THE SLEEP COMPANY
backed by science

HIGHLIGHTS

- The Sleep Company brings to the front Patented SmartGrid technology that provides 2X more support than an orthopaedic mattress and ultimate cushioning. SmartGrid has more than 2500 air channels to ensure you feel cool and comfy.
- As online brands witnessed exponential growth, The Sleep Company went from strength to strength, recording a 10X growth.
- Today, The Sleep Company's customer mix includes 65% of customers from the top 35 cities in the country and an ever-increasing customer base from tier 2 and 3 cities.
- Technology lies at the foundation of The Sleep Company and they have taken the conscious decision to leverage its power in every sphere of their functioning, from product development to delivery and communication. Their strength lies in the tech-based products that are miles ahead of the competition in terms of material and design technology.

The pandemic posed one of the biggest challenges to India Inc in the recent past. For a young firm like The Sleep Company, they had to quickly figure out their supply and delivery channels while ensuring smooth operations. Fortunately, they were able to quickly make the switch because of their D2C business model. As a tech-based digitally-native mattress company, they were able to capitalize on their digital presence, reaching out to the brand's growing consumer base through their website and other e-commerce platforms.

Retail presence & optimization

Market reach: Digitization goes beyond a marketing platform for The Sleep Company. With the disruption of offline marketing channels, the brand has also utilized digital platforms to communicate and gather feedback from their customers. "Understanding their pain points has helped us to improve our product and broaden our catalog with end-to-end comfort products. Digital platforms also enable data collation and processing, allowing us to improve our inventory management, thereby further facilitating cost-effective operations. Focusing on our product through a strong digital presence paid dividends as we broadened our market, reaching out to a wide cross-section of consumers," explains **Priyanka Goyal Salot, Co-Founder, The Sleep Company.**

She adds, "We are a digitally-native company with a D2C business model. Our niche undoubtedly lies in our product, which is based on our patented SmartGRID technology, putting us well ahead of competing products. From day one, our approach has been focused on leveraging our product by building a strong online presence, both for marketing, distribution and communication purposes".

Customer approach

Social media power: "In our branding and marketing efforts we have used social media to start a conversation on the importance of sleep, sleep tech, and the options available in the market today. Social media has emerged as a powerful medium in reaching out to consumers and in leading sales. We have recently launched an ad campaign with our brand ambassador Anil Kapoor. Digital campaigns like #GoSmartGRIDwithAk, facilitated our engagement with a wide range of people on different aspects of sleep science," Priyanka highlights.

"As a digitally-native D2C company, technology also lies at the heart of our marketing strategy. We have been successful in creating a digital-only marketplace where customers can reach us directly. Thanks to digital marketing, we were able to quickly establish country-wide marketing channels at a time when supply and delivery chains were severely hit worldwide. We have also leveraged an omnichannel communication strategy, reaching out to our consumers through multiple online avenues, including social media. Carefully deployed social media marketing strategies have helped us to target and retarget interested buyers

> WE ARE A DIGITALLY-NATIVE COMPANY WITH A D2C BUSINESS MODEL. OUR NICHE UNDOUBTEDLY LIES IN OUR PRODUCT, WHICH IS BASED ON OUR PATENTED SMARTGRID TECHNOLOGY, PUTTING US WELL AHEAD OF COMPETING PRODUCTS.
>
> **–Priyanka Goyal Salot**
> Co-Founder,
> The Sleep Company

through every relevant touchpoint. Today, it accounts for more than 30% of our leads!," Priyanka continues. The Sleep Company emerged as one of the top four highest-rated mattress brands on Amazon. Now, to augment their extensive digital reach they will be exploring an omnichannel strategy and offer their customers offline experiential centres as well.

Supply chain & fulfillment

Creating a difference: Last year, The Sleep Company also recorded their biggest festive season sale. Thanks to the successful run, the brand witnessed a 100 CR run rate in November 2021, a remarkable feat in just two years since inception. It now aims to cross the 1000 CR mark in the next 4-5 years. In July 2021, the brand raised INR 13.4 CR in pre-series A funding, which has been deployed in further strengthening their product, team, and brand awareness. Today, The Sleep Company has grown to become a more than 100 employees company, with 20,000+ customers.

With the global impact on supply chains, fulfillment has emerged as a critical issue in the retail industry. "We were able to overcome these challenges and fulfill our commitments because of two critical advantages – in-house manufacturing and a strategic warehousing model. Unlike many of our competitors, our products are manufactured in-house. This allows us complete control of supply and inventory management, which we have further improvised through our warehousing model. Under this strategic approach, we took the decision to establish warehouses near top-selling states and cities to further reduce the delivery time. These two advantages ensured that we were successful in tackling logistics and fulfillment by ensuring adequate inventory and timely shipments. As a D2C model, an efficient supply chain narrative has been one of our major strengths. We devised a strategic warehousing model whereby the bulk of the inventory was readily placed near the highest-selling states or cities. This helps us reduce delivery costs, minimize returns due to late shipments, and help in achieving a better customer experience," Priyanka signs off.

BUILDING A STRONG CUSTOMER-CENTRIC CULTURE

D2C brands are betting big on their strong customer-centric approaches, which help them stay closer to their customers every walk of the way.

Understanding customer needs and thereby integrating the learnings to tighten the customer approaches is something that the D2C ecosystem is fast accepting and executing to give way to a strong customer-centric culture. It is no more just about making your customer happy with the right products and services but also about ensuring that the path leading to your products is customer-friendly, every possible way.

Building a unique customer-centric approach

The idea of customer-centricity starts with creating the right customer profile, which takes into consideration the customer journey and what they like or dislike across all channels, where the brand is present. Mapping the customer's journey

through a multichannel approach and decoding the customer's profile is the right way to identify how the customer relates to the brand in question. Today, to become a brand that the customer recognises and loves, one needs to 'understand' and recognise the customer's needs first. Research shows that 90% of companies who fail to understand their customer needs become outdated faster than they can comprehend.

D2C marketing actually offers you a direct line to your customers, and in today's personalized world, it's more important than ever. A recent Statista survey found that 90% of U.S. consumers find marketing personalization very or somewhat appealing and in a similar vein SmarterHQ found that 72% of consumers say they will only engage with personalized messaging.

The dawn of personalization

Many experts regard personalization as the 'Amazon effect' as according to them Amazon's algorithms have been super predictive, allowing brands to know everything about their customers, which means they can create a customer-centric marketing strategy to draw them in. Personalized messaging and tailored product recommendations actually breeds the ground for the brand to become more approachable and creates a sense of intimacy with their customer, which in turn, keeps them loyal. In a world of almost limitless consumer choices, creating brand loyalty and shorter and easier paths to purchase should be among a brand's chief concerns in the new normal and beyond.

Building the customer-centric path to positive customer experience

In a world where every consumer is behind instant gratification, it is important for brands to stay on ground with the D2C approach and to do that marketing with a customer-centric overview can offer immense results. This approach creates a one-to-one communication and has many benefits translating into conversions. It helps brands learn who their customers are so they can tailor their products and services to truly fit their needs. The more knowledge, companies have on their customers, the better they can tailor the customer journey, personalize recommendations, offer compelling sales and deals, improve the overall user experience, and design faster and easier ways to purchase the brand's offerings. The moment consumers have positive interactions with brands, the more likely they are to become, and stay, customers. So, within the D2C ecosystem knowledge is now power and the more brands explore this power to strengthen their core and

THE PILLARS OF CUSTOMER-CENTRICITY

- How people relate to the brand and what they think about it, helps brands to build their narrative, which helps in either making or breaking the conversation with the consumer.
- Retaining old customers is way more expensive as compared to acquiring new ones. Brands need to focus on building relationships with their existing database in order to create 'customers for life'
- Existing customers for the brand are a big asset as they help in spreading the right word about the brand and fetch new customers through word of mouth publicity.
- When the brand is Customer-centric, it knows about people's exact needs, which will always pull them to the business and make a purchase.

D2C marketing actually offers you a direct line to your customers, and in today's personalized world, it's more important than ever.

interaction capabilities the easier it is for them to stay customer-friendly and customer-oriented.

Customer-centricity trends to watch out for

Speaking in the customer's language: When the brand is playing out a customer-centric roadmap, then the first thing that is important for the brand is to be relatable. To do this the brand needs to understand and speak exactly the way the customer wants them to speak. It is imperative to adapt a language and tonality of marketing, which the target audience can relate to. This will further excite and help the customer stay connected to the brand.

Use influencers and creators to tell the real story: Customer centric approach is always easy and both difficult to follow when it comes to social media. This is because the social space is too cluttered on the one hand and on the other, it allows the brands to tell focussed stories. Further, when the brand picks up the right influencers or creators to tell their story, then it gives a very personalized approach. This is a very big trend that is going to define the virtual space for digital-native brands in the era of Metaverse.

Kickstarting a relation with the right loyalty programs: Discounts are not everything today and mostly customers avoid brands who offer heavy discounts. They are ready to pay a price for things they can value. All they need is the brand to explain the value they are offering. It is not easy to decode value just by selling an innovative product, it is equally important to make the value integrated into the brand offerings and help the brand feel it all across the customer journey path.

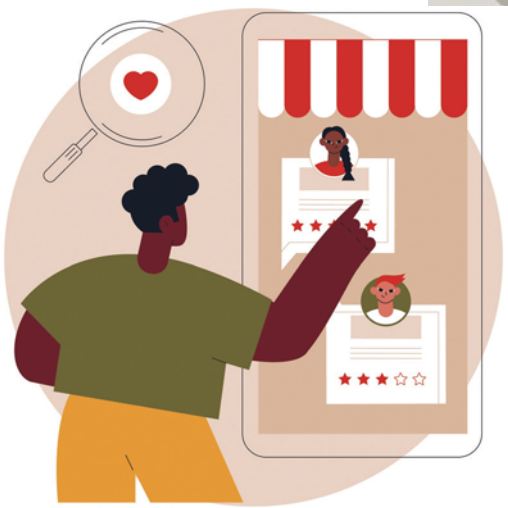
BRANDS THAT STAND ON STRONG CUSTOMER-CENTRIC APPROACHES

WHAT ARE THE PARAMETERS A BRAND WEIGHS TO MAKE CUSTOMER-CENTRICITY A REALITY?

ONLINE SURVEY

REACHING THE CUSTOMER RIGHTLY ACROSS TOUCHPOINTS

CUSTOMER CHOICES



BUILDING LOYALTY OFFERINGS

CREATING A NICHE COMMUNITY FOR LOYAL CUSTOMERS

TRIVIA CORNER

- Given their customer-centric approach at the product end, Aachho takes inputs from data, customer feedback and suggestions, influencer trends, and market analysis to curate every collection to meet the customer needs.
- IDAM House of Brands use data very effectively especially for omnichannel sales. Wherever the online sales are and however the market reacts and behaves, they try to take a similar approach in their offline business, studying the customer reactions. Similarly, when they see certain product lines do well in the retail market, they try to exponentially use them for their online consumers to ensure that online and offline consumers have equal market share and at the same time gain traction on different SQs in different categories based on geography and demographics.
- Loyalty has to do with what value we add in either helping or inspiring consumers. Thus, Fabriclore understands and practices that the loyalty essentially lies in additional value beyond discounts. Therefore, to offer a customer-centric approach the brand focuses on building a great community that they call FABTRIBE.

LACED IN LEGACY

Revered by aesthetes and admirers of handicrafts, The House of Aachho has become synonymous with the subtle luxury invoking the visions of soulful narratives and serene comfort.

AACHHO

HIGHLIGHTS

- On the online front, the brand is selling through their own online store and Nykaa Fashion. Physically, their collection is showcased at the Nykaa Fashion Retail store and they also conduct regular exhibitions around the country.
- The brand uses data extensively to understand the demographics, geographics, and other patterns of customers that help them plan their showcases and exhibitions. They also utilize data and AI-driven analytics to create and optimize their target audiences for their digital marketing campaigns.
- The brand understands the power of focused marketing and their strategy is focused on optimizing the customer experiences throughout their journey. For example, apart from end-to-end order processing emails, they also shoot frequent mailers to win back the new and regular shoppers by communicating about the new arrivals, exclusive discounts, etc.

The House of Aachho aims to transport you to an oasis of nostalgia where luxury and craft blend seamlessly. True to its meaning "Too Good" in Rajasthani, Aachho is indeed a soulful destination of unrivaled craft heritage that strikes a perfect chord between effortless styles and off the runway luxury. Aachho embodies an artistic lifestyle rooted in the cultural diversity of vibrant colours and classic handblock prints translated into exquisite handcrafted and ethnic products to satiate your quest for authentic regality.

Customer acquisition

Weaves of perfection: The focus for the brand is always on the customer and understanding them with clarity. **Anurag Singh Khangarot, Co-Founder, Aachho** mentions here "Our entire focus is on enhancing the customer experience. While approaches may be different, the end goal is pretty simple and clear and i.e., customer delight and satisfaction. At the product end, we take inputs from data, customer feedback and suggestions, influencer trends, and market analysis to curate our collections. However, while keeping up with the latest trends, we also focus on creating slow-fashion and sustainable collections that have longer lifetime value. At the marketing and communications end, all our approaches are focused on creating meaningful connections with the customers. This is done through storytelling-focused social media communication, encouraging user-generated content so that we understand the customer psyche better, etc."

Just acquiring the right set of customers is not enough, but continuing the brand journey with them is pivotal to the brand's growth story. So, the team always touch bases with their customers via call, WhatsApp, chat, and emails also with an integrated communication strategy to track their responses, understand their behaviour, and affinity towards Aachho. Through social media, the brand's main aim is to engage with customers through fresh and organic content that makes them feel like a part of the brand. For example, they plan and execute multiple social media campaigns directed at involving customers. Recently, they launched their own brand song 'Aachho Bannadi', dedicating it to all their customers. Moreover, they planned a mega giveaway to encourage their customers to create dancing reels on the song.

Shopper behaviour & retention

Studying the trend: Customer sentiment analysis is an integral and ongoing part of the business. "We say this because customer sentiments and behaviours evolve or change with time, due to which we constantly need to listen to their needs and adapt our offerings and services. At the nascent stage, we were relying more on product feedback to understand the customer needs. However, as we grew, we started focusing on customer experiences. Hence, we now use a multi-disciplinary approach to analyze the customer sentiments and emotional needs/ expectations," **Rimjhim Hada, Founder, Aachho** highlights.

As part of this approach the brand uses social media listening, reputation management, and customer data analysis.

> WE HAVE BEEN USING A CRM PLATFORM FOR A WHILE NOW THAT UNIFIES ALL THE CUSTOMER QUERIES, MESSAGES, ETC., FROM ALL SOURCES AT ONE PLACE, HELPING US DO AWAY WITH THE DUPLICITY OF EFFORTS, AND OPTIMIZING THE RESPONSE TIMES.
>
> **– Rimjhim Hada**
> Founder, Aachho

> OUR ENTIRE FOCUS IS ON ENHANCING THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE. WHILE APPROACHES MAY BE DIFFERENT, THE END GOAL IS PRETTY SIMPLE AND CLEAR AND I.E., CUSTOMER DELIGHT AND SATISFACTION. AT THE PRODUCT END, WE TAKE INPUTS FROM DATA, CUSTOMER FEEDBACK AND SUGGESTIONS, INFLUENCER TRENDS, AND MARKET ANALYSIS TO CURATE OUR COLLECTIONS.
>
> **– Anurag Singh Khangarot**
> Co-Founder, Aachho

They also track customer journeys through heat maps to understand customer needs, buying patterns, and other variables.

Loyalty & CRM

Working on loyalty: "We have been using a CRM platform for a while now that unifies all the customer queries, messages, etc., from all sources at one place, helping us do away with the duplicity of efforts, and optimizing the response times. In terms of inculcating brand loyalty, we already have multiple programs in place and many more are in the testing or implementation phase. We leverage emails, calls, Whatsapp, etc., to manage customer queries as well as communicate about what's new at Aachho to keep them engaged and informed. We also offer incentives to our shoppers in the form of rewards programs, subscription benefits, exclusive discounts, etc., to build greater loyalty," Rimjhim adds.

Being an online-first brand and operating in a highly-competitive market, data is imperative to the brand as it helps bridge that brand-customer gap and provide factual insights about customer needs. They also keep a close tab on the data across social media channels as well as their website to develop their marketing as well as the sales strategy. Additionally, the core of the brand's ORM is to attain customer satisfaction. Every customer, whether a new one or a regular one, is important to the brand. "We get hundreds of queries every day and many queries that come to us are special requests, asking us to customize the dress for their special event or to fast-track their shipments etc. We deeply value their trust in us and try to take their requests into consideration whenever possible or provide the best possible alternate solutions," Anurag highlights.

BUILD FOR COMFORT

aastey, also known as the lockdown baby of the founders Jeevika Tyagi and Kanupriya Mundhra, was started in 2021.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Clothes are meant to fit your body and not the other way around. So, aastey creates an ecosystem to offer multiple sizes, in between sizes, and multiple lengths.
- 2021 June, the brand took an oath to never disrupt or hurt the environment and in their effort to take care of the planet, they turned sustainable.
- The brand has also adapted a hybrid way of working in an effort to reduce carbon footprint and tackle environmental issues.

Two everyday women worn down by work, surrounded by the grief of a pandemic, realised that they had begun to lose sight of their happy moments. The negatives had begun over shadowing the positives. so to right this, they coined the term, 'live aastey'. The brand's mission is to create a world where people aren't differentiated on the basis of their colour or size. and to eliminate all biases that have been created over centuries based on what size one wears or how their body type defines what is available for them to wear.

Customer acquisition

Innovation at the front: Jeevika Tyagi, Co-founder & CEO, aastey mentions, "Innovation takes a lot of time and money, especially when you have to create the best for the customers. When it comes to producing sustainable and durable clothes, it becomes even more challenging because, in India, it is not particularly easy to manufacture sustainable fabrics so that definitely increased the difficulty for us. It took a year for us to sample, source, and innovate our in-house fabrics so they can be long-lasting and sustainable. Our work set is around 70 – 75% sustainable and we are looking to keep pushing ourselves till all of our products can be completely sustainable.".

Once the brand achieved the perfect product fit, their strategy was simply to let people try the products and see how comfortable and long-lasting these products can be at all times of the day and night. This was the simple way of approaching and acquiring the customer, as the brand did not want to just market the products but offer them a chance to choose a lifestyle that is more conscious of the environment and of our roots.

Shopper behaviour & retention

Customer on priority: Customer feedback is very essential for the brand. When they started their journey, they conducted market surveys to understand what the customers wanted. After the lockdown, there has been an increase in demand for comfortable clothes because many women had to multitask different roles within the confines of their homes. Being a women-owned and women-led team, the brand understands the concerns and daily needs of women and strives to achieve them through their own experiences. "We also try and talk to as many women as we can through our multiple social media channels and podcasts to understand their different experiences and create our products and the subsequent marketing strategy accordingly. We are building a Customer Lifecycle Management (CLM) process which is basically a system where we constantly ask people for feedback through emails. We also follow up with our customers on WhatsApp to understand exactly what they liked about the product and in which places we can improve. We try to create personal relationships with our customers which is why we call it the aastey tribe so that the process from innovation to delivery can be transparent," Jeevika adds.

> WE ALSO FOLLOW UP WITH OUR CUSTOMERS ON WHATSAPP TO UNDERSTAND EXACTLY WHAT THEY LIKED ABOUT THE PRODUCT AND IN WHICH PLACES WE CAN IMPROVE. WE TRY TO CREATE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH OUR CUSTOMERS WHICH IS WHY WE CALL IT THE AASTEY TRIBE SO THAT THE PROCESS FROM INNOVATION TO DELIVERY CAN BE TRANSPARENT.
>
> **– Jeevika Tyagi**
> Co-founder & CEO, aastey

Social knowhow: She continues, "We get a lot of insights and data from the social media channels and our digital ad campaigns. As this is an online-only platform, we use these insights to improve our e-commerce sales strategy. If a product is doing better on social media, then we will know which ones to push more in our campaigns. It also helps us to plan out other logistics and supply problems like reordering and restocking our existing products. So, it definitely helps us to figure out what is working and what is not working. We are continuously in touch with our customers on WhatsApp and Instagram to understand what is working for them and what they do not like. We always reply to any kind of complaints with regard to quality and make sure to look for a solution".

Customers want to see that the company truly cares about their time and money. Keeping this in mind the brand has a very efficient team that works hard to make sure that the customer's experience is as personalized as possible. They always reply to all their Instagram DMs without fail. "For instance, there were a lot of people inquiring about the purple t-shirt on Instagram which is still not in our collection so we decided to order it immediately. If someone is not able to navigate the website, then our team personally helps them with all difficulties; whether it is placing a return or an exchange order," she highlights.

Loyalty & CRM

Taking it slow & steady: "We really believe that we are building a community and not a customer base. That is how we differentiate ourselves from other brands as well. It is a tribe and every customer is part of the process here. Every brand can give loyalty reward points and discount codes but this sense of belongingness and community that we are trying to achieve is what we believe will lead to more loyal customers. That is what ultimately makes us unique as a brand," Jeevika sums up.

QUALITY TOUCH

Aegte has been successful in the Indian market because it provides effective skin and hair care products. Quality of ingredients and effectiveness of a personal care product are the key factors which impact brand loyalty.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The brand started with just one product, now Aegte has a collection of 28 natural & premium products & is trusted by as many as 5 lakh customers across India.
- The effective botanical composition of products and positive brand reputation of Aegte has helped them gain a sizable market share.
- Consumers can purchase Aegte products from the brand's official website, Amazon, Flipkart, Snapdeal Paytm Mall & 1mg.
- Aegte presents its myriad range of skin and hair care essentials for everyone to reap the nature-grown skin and hair care products.

Aegte Lifesciences is the brainchild of Rupali Sharma (me) and her husband Dhiren Sharma. The story of Aegte began when Rupali just had her second child and was suffering from a bad phase of hair fall. She used a homemade hair care remedy made with onions given by her grandmother and was thoroughly impressed with the quick and effective results. It was then when she decided to channel the power of ayurvedic & natural remedies for the greater good. She started Aegte with an aim of bringing highly effective natural formulations and providing luxurious skin and hair care for people at large. They chose the name 'Aegte' as it is a Danish word that means 'authentic'.

Customer acquisition

Naturally fit: The biggest advantage of a D2C brand is its ability to collect customer feedback in real-time and feed it into the product development loop without losing the essence. Through this agile way of working, the brand aligns the products to suit the customer demands, which not only improves the business performance but also aids the positive customer sentiment online. Post-purchase interaction has been a key pointer in understanding and decoding what actually the buyers want, be it through comments, reviews, likes and dislikes or social media activities.

Rupali Sharma, Founder, Aegte adds here, "The quality and value of a product are likely to witness deeper scrutiny by consumers who indulge in extensive research before purchasing any product. Hence, to build a customer-centric approach, we ensure to go by our product's USP and innovation on the manufacturing front by following standardized practices, safe and secure processes, best-in-class quality and high levels of operational efficiency to fulfill the demands of our consumers. Along with the quality, we make sure to curate products with proven ingredients that stand up to their promise of delivering positive results, which automatically brings the customer back to us, thereby helping in retention".

Shopper behaviour & retention

Understanding the change: The customer expectations of being in constant touch have increased the focus of the brand's business on omnichannel experience. Artificial Intelligence (AI) plays a vital role in bridging the gaps by providing insights into the changing needs and preferences of customers, creating effective customer roadmaps that scale and deliver consistent experiences. It helps them track marketing campaigns, understand purchase decisions of different customers, and evaluate through the feedback on their numerous social media and digital platforms according to their age groups, traction and insights.

> BEING A D2C BRAND, OUR MAIN FOCUS IS ON MAINTAINING THE QUALITY AND INGREDIENTS OF THE PRODUCTS THAT CATER TO CUSTOMER DEMANDS. AND, THIS IS WHAT HELPS US RETAIN CUSTOMERS. PROVIDING DISCOUNTS OR COUPONS DURING FESTIVALS, FREE SHIPPING, ADDING LOYALTY POINTS WITH EACH PURCHASE AND A FEW MORE CUSTOMER-CENTRIC STRATEGIES HELPS US RETAIN THE EXISTING CUSTOMERS.
>
> **– Rupali Sharma**
> Founder, Aegte

Scaling omnichannel strategies by data-driven marketing with AI advancements, helps the brand improve their selling effectiveness. "By using relevant data from predictive models, AI helps us to understand prospective customers. This allows us to predict the behaviour of potential new customers and design improved marketing strategies. We offer a seamless buying journey to influence the customer's buying decision. Being a D2C brand, eliminates the middlemen so there's no scope of false assumptions, helping us to indulge more in personalized customer interactions that drive our sales," she mentions.

"Being a D2C brand, our main focus is on maintaining the quality and ingredients of the products that cater to customer demands. And, this is what helps us retain customers. Providing discounts or coupons during festivals, free shipping, adding loyalty points with each purchase and a few more customer-centric strategies helps us to retain the existing customers. As our products are completely results-oriented, it builds a solid customer retention policy and increases customer loyalty. Also, the data gives an insight about their buying patterns and what they like about us to design our marketing strategies for certain demographics of the population," she further notes.

Loyalty & CRM

Keeping it trendy: Rupali further adds, "Multiple discussions with the R&D team and Manufacturing teams help us craft unbeatable products that are unique and aim to set trends in the market. We focus on retaining customers by being empathetic through our customer service. We build trust and gain confidence from our customers by ensuring protected transactions and personal details, offering promotions, shipping free deliveries and several options for a seamless journey. Word of mouth boosts the confidence in other consumers as the products have been tested and tried, which promotes our business' through customer loyalty and retention".

CONNECTED TO THE ROOTS

Amrutam is an Ayurvedic Lifestyle Brand and a Wellness Community. All their products are made with a lot of love and authentic ayurvedic, herbal and natural ingredients.

AMRUTAM

HIGHLIGHTS

- Amrutam's primary focus remains on four key elements where they have always #DeliveredMoreThanPromised, which are quality service, finishing for each product, durability in order to make each product effective, and price satisfaction score to assure that each product offering stands the quality test on the best price tag.
- Amrutam is certified by the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)'s cruelty free norms and some of their products are completely vegan.
- Amrutam products are certified by the Ministry of AYUSH (a regulatory authority in charge of quality control when it comes to ayurvedic products).
- The brand has an online magazine called Amrutam Patrika, which shares informational and lifestyle content blog articles in Hindi, to make a wider audience in India more aware.

Amrutam started as a manufacturing business in 2006. They made ayurvedic herbal medicines that were prescribed by doctors, and distributed the products through B2B supply chain where medical stores stocked their products. In 2017, when the second generation joined the business - Amrutam took a digital leap. The brand then launched Amrutam as a D2C ayurvedic brand and offered health care and personal care products. Since they already knew that their products are therapeutic and preventative, they wanted to position themselves as a lifestyle brand rather than being on the curative side.

Customer acquisition

Attracting with right approach: "We started content creation - blog posts, social media presence, and then, slowly moved towards Facebook and Google ads. We wanted to make sure we had all the touchpoints with their customer in order to build a community and engage with them, and therefore, after a few months of traction, we delisted ourselves from all the marketplaces and solely scaled the business on the website alone, to give a meaningful experience to our customers from start till end. The critical aspect of our journey has been to help the audience understand why they should turn to an Ayurvedic lifestyle. Additionally, explaining why Amrutam products are unique and why the audience should choose us. We accomplished this via storytelling," **Stuti Ashok Gupta, Principal: Brand & Vision, Amrutam.co.in** mentions.

There is no secret sauce she admits, other than listening to your customers. In the initial phase of the brand's digital journey they first launched Health Care Malts and very quickly learnt from their customers that they are looking for easy to use Hair Care recipes and that's when Kuntal Care Hair Spa entered the customers household and became a magic potion for all their community. The brand has pivoted from medicinal to healthcare to haircare, only because they listen to their customers and take their feedback very sincerely. "We were quick to realize that in a customer's digital journey we need to guide them at each step and start serving them with the basic needs and slowly move to the complex ones," Stuti adds.

Shopper behaviour & retention

Quick response: "As much as we are digital-first, we understand that our audience needs ways to connect with humans on the other side of business, to talk to, to ask queries about which products to buy, to share their concerns, and report grievances if they face a problem with delivery partners during the shipping of Amrutam order. To be able to provide a both tech-enabled automated solution and a human touchpoint, we have worked on a strong procedure to manage customer's sentiments - preorder, while ordering and post-order. Some of the ways our customer can contact us at any stage are WhatsApp [we use Business On Bot and Gupshup services], Phone calls [via Exotel and Zoho Desk], Automated shipping msgs [Shiprocket], emails [Zoho Desk, WebEngage], Instagram DM and Facebook messages through CRM and Facebook

> AS MUCH AS WE ARE DIGITAL-FIRST, WE UNDERSTAND THAT OUR AUDIENCE NEEDS WAYS TO CONNECT WITH HUMANS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF BUSINESS.
>
> **– Stuti Ashok Gupta**
> Principal: Brand & Vision, Amrutam.co.in

> THE CORE OF CUSTOMER RETENTION IS ENGAGEMENT, AND WE AT AMRUTAM UNDERSTAND THAT VERY WELL. IF YOU ARE ONLY SHOWING PRODUCTS TO YOUR CUSTOMERS, IT MAY GET REPETITIVE & BORING, AND YOU WOULD SEE THE DROP IN CTR, CONVERSIONS, ETC..
>
> **– Agnim Gupta**
> Principal: Tech & Growth, Amrutam.co.in

messenger," Stuti highlights.

Agnim Gupta, Principal: Tech & Growth, Amrutam.co. mentions, "The core of customer retention is Engagement, and we at Amrutam understand that very well. If you are only showing products to your customers, it may get repetitive & boring, and you would see the drop in CTR, Conversions, etc. We have consciously engaged our customers with the content we create, Ayurveda Quizzes we design, Informational & Inspirational Blog series, Free PDFs (Health Topics), Community projects like Rediscovering Self Mental Health Podcast (Apple Podcast, Spotify, etc.), Amrutam Raga Project - Music series (Apple Music, Spotify, Jio Saavn, etc.) Apart from this, we make sure that we call our top customers every few months, understand their pain points, and listen to their feedback and experiences. And try to implement changes suggested by them".

Loyalty & CRM

Customer is king: The brand uses customer engagement platforms like Clevertap & WebEngage, which help them analyse, segment the customers and target without spamming them. These platforms make sense of the collected data from different perspectives and then engage the user with the correct information via communication channels like - emails, SMS, WhatsApp, web push, etc. These platforms use multiple algorithms to show retention cohorts, funnels, paths for the brand to have a better understanding to drive sales & increase retention.

Amrutam creates journeys to make the user flow more supportive and helpful, and less interruptive. The brand believes that their products and brand must add value to their customers' lives at every step of the way.

DAZZLING TRINKETS

Anayah Jewellery is a modern, celebratory brand with classic and timeless costume jewels that hold meaning and reflect the wearer's personality.

anayah
JEWELLERY

HIGHLIGHTS

- Anayah comprises a colourful, cheerful assortment of sharply-priced costume jewels that feel completely accessible and can break out on any occasion, representing extravagant, traditional or even playful moods.
- Aiming to bring the latest trends in jewellery and make it available to a global audience, Anayah adds something special to fit every style and sentiment.
- The brand retails at Aashni & Co in London, SFK Bridals in Pakistan and Pernia's Pop Up Shop, Aashni & Co and Aza Fashions in India.
- Anayah is popular for its classic, opulent bridal pieces that have been adorned by celebrities such as Kareena Kapoor Khan, Jahnvi Kapoor, Mahira Khan, and Fawad Khan. Having collaborated with influencers, designers and bridal couture houses in the UK and Pakistan, the collections feature precious pieces that can impress and surprise every kind of woman.

A representation of India's heritage jewellery art, Anayah is a beautiful amalgamation of handcrafted fashion jewellery that uses time-tested techniques to bring alive opulent pieces for the modern woman. From symbolic, life-long jewels that make for family heirlooms to everyday classics that are versatile and contemporary, these jewels add a personal flair to make any ensemble feel uniquely yours.

Founded by **Nilofar Jaques,** each collection is crafted in India. The glittering range is a reflection of Nilofar's life that celebrates her father's inspirational journey. It is a splendid bridge that keeps her rooted in Indian heritage and craftsmanship. Traditional kundan pieces come together with modern Cubic Zirconia designs that promise an array of classic fine styles and fashion-forward pieces, alongside a growing line of accessories for men such as intricately crafted kurta buttons and more. The innovative jewellery line is particularly popular for its bespoke vertical, allowing brides and women looking for festive jewellery to customise and personalise each piece that helps reflect their personal style and expression.

Customer acquisition

Understanding the trend: As we start to adjust to the new normal, consumers project a massive shift in their lifestyle, ultimately leading to changing purchasing patterns. This opens a plethora of advantages for D2C brands, as learning intimately about their consumer's likes and dislikes win them big time. D2C segment in India is responsible for accelerating the confidence amongst the consumer, as their products are designed to cater to their aesthetic. Anayah Jewellery is a consumer-centric brand that resonates with its consumer's personalities and ties a certain emotional value to it. The marketing and business strategies revolve around its target audience's preferences, providing a cutting edge to the brand.

Anayah Jewellery designs glimmering costume jewels by indulging in brilliant craftsmanship. The brand introduces an array of cleanly cut designs along with fashion-forward pieces for men and women, complimenting every occasion. Since the brand has a royal touch to it, all its opulent pieces possess a voguish vintage feel and name to it to strike the right chord with the audience. This global brand collaborates with world-renowned faces, well known bridal houses in the UK, and influencers, making a way to the consumer's wish list. The products are sharply priced, which cajoles the consumer's playful mood giving the brand the right direction.

Shopper behavior & retention

Setting the appeal right: When aiming for customer retention, the brand makes their cut with the customers through marketing

> WHILE STAYING TRUE TO OUR ROOTS YET WALKING WITH THE VOGUE, ANAYAH IS THE BRIDGE OF FINE CLASSICS WITH A HINT OF CONTEMPORARY STATEMENT. TO CONNECT WITH THE TARGET AUDIENCE THE GLIMMERING COLLECTIONS ARE ADORNED BY WELL-KNOWN CELEBRITIES.
>
> **–Nilofar Jaques**
> Founder, Anayah Jewellery

and to give it a personal touch works with a dedicated team, who walk that extra mile to reach the customer and understand exactly what they have on their mind when it comes to jewellery shopping. Anayah Jewellery is a brilliant costume jewellery brand that incorporates a highly skilled team of craftsmen and a spectacular marketing team. The final products received by the customer are the hard work and grit of both teams. "While staying true to our roots yet walking with the vogue Anayah is the bridge of fine classics with a hint of contemporary statement. To connect with the target audience the glimmering collections are adorned by well-known celebrities such as Fawad Khan, Taboo, Kareena Kapoor Khan and many more. Known for its finest quality of metals and gems, Anayah's audiences are loyal due to its heritage," Nilofar Jaques, Founder of Anayah Jewellery adds.

At Anayah Jewellery customers' opinions, experiences and personalities are at the helm of its core. As technology has taken the reins of the world, Anayah Jewellery proudly strives to use it for an enhanced consumer experience. Not only that but the changing behavioural patterns are gauged through data and AI is flawlessly implemented into designing upcoming opulent pieces.

Loyalty & CRM

Data to the rescue: The growth of data gathered from the consumer is the newest range of innovation that competes in the giant spectrum of e-commerce. The e-commerce industry is booming, giving ripening opportunities to brands, as it opens the door of understanding consumer patterns through data. "To revolutionize our business space predictive search leads, and targeted personalization are possible with the data gathered. In return, this big phenomenon of technology; Data drives our e-commerce sales. There is a massive shift in how brands are addressing the customer experience. As the saying goes 'a happy customer will talk to you through their wallet' it is essential for businesses that have an online presence to be prepared for this digitalized world. The omnichannel experience is seamlessly connecting the physical world with the digital experience to drive sales. Data and AI impact our customer services and customer experience. Since we get first-hand insight into the transitioning preferences of customers, creating customer roadmaps delivers consistent experiences," Nilofar points out.

ART ADVANTAGE

ArtzFolio is a one of India's fastest growing custom product brand for home, interior & office in India, with capabilities of manufacturing and endless bespoke customization in over 50 product categories and a product collection of more than 6 million SKUs.

ARTZFOLIO

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Sold 1.5 million+ units to over 80,000 unique customers and 250+ business clients.**
- **Offering 6 million+ designs/images in 50+ product categories with bespoke and custom designing**
- **Running 24X7 to move shipments to the brand's dedicated 8 warehouses for guaranteed delivery across the globe.**
- **QR Codes and instant chat options are valuable ways to interact with the new-age online shoppers. Each package that ArtzFolio delivers includes an insert with all their company details and highlights seamless ways to chat with the team should there be a need. In addition, they ask for customer feedback either through a form that opens using a QR code or an email.**

A 100% 'Made in India' brand, ArtzFolio is known for its print-on-demand services that it has fine-tuned over months to make way for customer-centric products and approaches.

The brand stands on the backbone of personalization, which also means delivering suitable product recommendations through various channels, including email, category pages, paid ads, and even welcome messages on our website.

Customer acquisition

Keeping it easygoing: ArtzFolio has a separate team for handling customer data via AI & Machine learning. It helps them personalize customer experiences right down to the level of their personas. The brand also believes that cloud-based price optimization and management apps are easier to use and more powerful based on rapid advances in AI and machine learning algorithms than ever before. AI and machine learning helps them strengthen their order tracking across each channel combined with predictions of allocation and out-of-stock conditions along with reducing operational risks.

The data also helps them accelerate online sales through pop-up ads and special offers. It works by predicting what action the website visitors are likely to take next — and changing that action with an offer they can't refuse.

Shopper behaviour & retention

Customer first: As a consumer-focused brand, ArtzFolio collects customer feedback in real-time and feeds it into the product development loop to ensure that they don't lose their essence. To win over online customers who indulge in extensive research before making a purchase, they have set up in-house manufacturing capabilities that allow them to integrate customer requirements into the product.

"We wanted to create a source to communicate our convictions and our values. So, we put a lot of attention and detail into everything we do – right from procuring 'Made in India' raw materials to focusing on the livelihood of the local families. We believe if customers aren't happy, they won't stay with your brand. If you don't have customers, you don't have a business. So, we ensure every employee, from the CEO to the frontline worker, lives and breathes the customer. Build it into our mission, values, and vision. We take customer feedback very seriously and focus on improving data quality. Our foundation for feedback listening is to look for patterns in the review. If more than one customer is talking about something repeatedly, it is usually worth looking into. We also ensure that we are consistently available to assist our consumers at every step of the way," **Rajat Khandelwal, Founder, ArtzFolio** mentions.

A long-lasting customer is more valuable for the brand, rather than a single transaction. By making a customer feel known, those long-term relationships with their customers will result in loyalty and retention – and ultimately higher revenue. Furthermore, the brand leverage data to

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>
> **– Rajat Khandelwal**
> Founder, ArtzFolio

enhance offer personalization to ensure their customers feel that their products are worth the money they spend on them. Finally, to further incentivize customer service, they tie employee compensation, recognition and reward structures directly to meet the customer's needs. This helps to build trust and empower employees to think customer first. "loyalty programs and remarketing tactics do not give them an edge in a cluttered market. Therefore, retention analysis tools allow us to evaluate our progress with customer retention. At ArtzFolio, we identify what campaigns, platforms and products bring in the most loyal customers. Then, we use these findings to optimize our marketing, focusing on retention," he adds.

Loyalty & CRM

Keeping it real: The brand has created a niche for themselves that solves a critical customer pain point. People ultimately buy what holds value for them. Here are some unique marketing strategies they use to reach more customers, encourage repeat business and build our brand loyalty:

- **Leverage social media:** It is one of the most powerful tools to connect with your customers. The brand curates content for their pages that the customers resonate with. Each story, post and video are carefully strategized. They aim to connect with customers directly and offer them content that can help build recall for the brand.
- **Partner with influencers:** In today's day and age, reaching your audience is tricky unless you partner with someone who already possesses a following that overlaps with your brand's TG. In this regard ArtzFolio identifies the right people from a pool of influencers who share similar values and collaborate with them for engaging campaigns, helping us garner the right kind of traction.
- **Engage customers with chat:** The brand team is available to chat with customers 24x7 hours via WhatsApp. This is an excellent way to open hassle-free two-way communication with customers and respond to them in real-time.
- **Developing customer personas:** Personas define who the customer is and what they like and lend insight into their buying patterns to serve them better. Through the research of their ideal customers, they develop existing personas to personalize their service even further.

CONSCIOUS CHOICE

Beej is an effort to create a brand where creativity, ethical practices and conscious fashion co-exist and thrive.

beej

HIGHLIGHTS

- The brand was selected as one of the 20 brands as a part of a UN Women Industry Disruptor program in collaboration with Niti Aayog. This event was organized to honour women-led brands, who are going to disrupt the fashion space.
- Beej was incubated by NSRCEL-IIM Bangalore as a part of their first D2C cohort
- Beej is the first lifestyle brand in India working with multiple alternative materials including leather alternatives made from cactus, cork, pineapple leaves and rubber.
- Transparency in the supply chain and picking up suppliers and artisans who value sustainability to using the right sustainable materials, the entire value system for Beej is robust and that is the brand's biggest USP.
- Beej holds many global certifications for its world-class sustainable products.

The story of Beej is deeply connected to the **Founder Arundhati Kumar's** personal journey of moving towards mindful choices. In 2019, she started with a resolve to be more conscious of her actions. Mid-way through that year, she hung up her boots on a long corporate career, with the intent to pursue something that resonated with her belief system. But without much of a plan, she got drawn towards her 45-year old family business. For so many decades, her family has been in the business of manufacturing leather accessories; she was set to continue the legacy. But now, she wanted to do it differently. She began researching alternative sustainable materials and discovered a whole new world that was unknown to her before. That was her turning point and the genesis of Beej. The more she saw, the more she believed that sustainability and style can and must co-exist.

Customer acquisition

Creating a conscious ground: When talking about winning customers, Arundhati mentioned that the process has been a learning for them, "because for what we are trying to do, not many antecedents are available. I know and I believe sustainability is the only way forward for the fashion industry and here we are trying to keep the balance between what customers want and what the world needs. We understood quickly that what customers are primarily looking for are fashion products that are affordable and high on quality. With the growing awareness around climate change and plastic pollution, customers were now also seeking alternatives that were sustainable. However there still aren't enough customers choosing a product based on its sustainability quotient alone. I think the challenge we have has been in keeping the balance – designing products, researching materials, innovating designs that appeal to customers. This still stands true to our philosophy of being a conscious brand," she mentions.

Shopper behaviour & retention

Studying the need gap: The brand's marketing strategy is hinged around building awareness around the materials they work with and what makes them unique. It's important, she feels, to help customers see what's in it for them and how their 'individual' purchases are making a big difference. "That's what we try to do through every customer touch point that we have, including our social media, website blogs, performance campaigns etc. Beej is still a young brand, and so far, we've had the bandwidth to connect with every single client. Between me and the team, we are able to reach out to clients individually to understand what their buying journey was, how they feel about their Beej purchases, any post-purchase

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>
> **– Arundhati Kumar**
> Founder, Beej

dissonance, what can we do differently etc. Customer feedback is something we take very seriously. We also use these opportunities to help clarify any questions customers may have on materials, quality, durability, sustainability claims etc.," she adds.

At Beej the team is very engaged with their customers. There have been numerous instances when clients have reached out to seek advice on design, customization requests, gifting ideas etc. Sometimes they also have special requests on packaging, express deliveries, and a message to be added. "For us, the effort is to make the purchase as seamless and delightful as possible. So, if going that little extra mile costs us a little extra, but gets us a loyal and delighted customer, we are happy to do that," she points out.

Loyalty & CRM

Winning customer for life: "Apart from offering special discounts to our customers, we haven't done much in the last year. But this year, we plan to start a service where clients, who have had their bags for more than a year can send it back to us for cleaning and minor repairs if needed," she highlights. The brand is ready to look at omnichannel sales in the future and are slowly building their focus towards that.

The brand leverages data at a very basic level, to understand what's selling and what's not. Also the same gives them a sense of what's the average AOV across various platforms and what their customers are looking for. "This has helped us place our products in a more scientific manner across our various channel partners, also optimize on stock, so we are neither holding too less or too much. That is important to us, as we try to optimize inventory to minimize waste. On our brand channels data has helped us understand, what's the kind of information people are seeking, how to make customer journeys easier, what are the new products we should be adding to our portfolio, understanding pricing etc.," She further adds.

VARIETY ON OFFER

Founded in 2012, fashion brand 'Bewakoof' has always aimed to add light heartedness to life through its self-expressive products and fun shopping experiences. Loved for its offerings in casual-wear, it takes pride in being Indian and being relatable to the Indian audience. Having begun as a T-shirt brand, today Bewakoof has adapted its product range to cater to the growing work-from-home audience through sleepwear, shorts and joggers.

Bewakoof.com

HIGHLIGHTS

- Bewakoof has raised ₹170 crore from leading investors like InvestCorp and Ivy Cap. The brand has strengthened its sales to more than 20,000 products per day.
- It has a total customer base of 10 million and is adding more than 2 lakh new customers every month with a repeat customer rate of 65%.
- Bewakoof's biggest achievement has been building traction and engagement on its own channel. Today, 95% of its sales happen through its native channel - bewakoof.com.
- Backed by 6.1 million followers on Social Media, Bewakoof has touched sales of ₹300 crore and a year-on-year revenue growth of 106%.

Bewakoof, one of the fastest growing D2C brand has also recently launched Cosmos Beauty. With this, Bewakoof has entered into the fast growing beauty market in India. The name Cosmos comes from Cosmic as the product design, packaging and formulation is inspired from natural ingredients and minerals to create a unique solution. Under the Cosmos brand, 43 products ranging from day & night creams to after shave to bath salts to serums, will go live on Bewakoof.com and all marketplaces.

The idea of beauty is fast evolving. Bewakoof, which is known for its quirky self, is entering this new business segment with a refreshing range of products that will see unique formulations like Rose and Zinc for hydration gel, Avocado and Vitamin C for anti-aging mask and Magnesium and Vitamin C for face moisturizer.

Customer acquisition

Exploring the new: The brand admits that the pandemic has brought about a significant behavioural change in customers towards D2C brands and online shopping and they did see an influx of new customers especially from the tier 2 and tier 3 markets. For audiences shopping on Bewakoof for the first time for example, relies a lot on online reviews. "For us, we heavily rely on customer surveys and feedback on social media from our followers to understand the customer sentiment of our target audience. As a brand, Bewakoof has carved its space in the minds and hearts of the millennials with its fashion range of Apparel, Backpacks, Flip Flops and Mobile covers. We understand our customers well, feel the solutions they need for different occasions, are a vehicle for their expressions, speak their language tone and tenor. We get them. Our track record and data show a strong demand for differentiated beauty brands that have efficacy, fair price and don't discriminate, who don't propagate the idea of fair skin but address the problems for all skin types and concerns that prevent them from enjoying a healthy skin, hair and body. This has helped us carve a new segment to win a new set of customers now. We will be disappointed if we don't hit Rs 100 crore in 18 months and we are quite confident of hitting Rs 500 crore in 4 years," **Prabhkiran Singh, Founder and CEO, Bewakoof** mentions.

Cosmos beauty has gone live with 43 SKUs in phase 1 on Bewakoof.com as well as all top marketplaces like Amazon, Myntra, Tata Cliq, Flipkart, Nykaa. Another 45 SKUs to go live in phase 2 in a month's time And 200 more in a quarter. The beauty

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>
> **–Prabhkiran Singh**
> Founder and CEO, Bewakoof

range has been formulated with natural ingredients enriched with minerals like Copper, Zinc for delivering higher efficacy to beauty concerns of their customers. Price range starts from Rs 350 onwards.

Shopper behaviour & retention

Launch as per demand: "We launch all our products after a series of feedback rounds with customers and customers vote for the products they want to see us launch on Bewakoof. This along with google trends data and what people search on our portal gives us a good insight on understanding customer specific needs of our audience. For us, machine learning and ads on google, youtube, instagram, facebook and Amazon, Flipkart ads drive a significant portion of our revenue. Performance driven through these channels are all tracked by an attribution tool that helps us optimize and get the best results. We also store channel level data in our internal DB tool Qlik and act on things accordingly," Prabhkiran adds.

Loyalty & CRM

Offer galore: Over a period of time, the focus for Bewakoof has changed to an end-to-end customer experience where along with the in-App shopping experience, the post-purchase experience has also become critical. Delivery turnaround time (TAT) is where innovations are happening big time.

"We strongly believe in a 'data over gut' approach. Be it with product launches or optimisation on the portal, what marketing campaigns to pick, data is absolutely at the core of all our decision making. Customer retention ownership at Bewakoof is with the marketing department. It is a data led approach where we retarget customers at defined intervals in their customer lifetime journey and try to get them excited with our new launches and offers. Our loyalty program Bewakoof Tribe has over 1 lac active users and these customers contribute to over 25% of our revenue. We try our best to lure them with exclusive offers, discounts and events to keep them hooked to Bewakoof," he sums up.

TRENDS ON POINT

Big & Bold is a homegrown brand aspiring to add a statement in everyday life by bringing finest leather products.

Big & Bold

HIGHLIGHTS

- Big & Bold stands on the principles of providing the customer with Better UX, which is interpreted through a start to end impeccable experience and finishes with sustainable packaging.
- Whole idea of Big & Bold came in from, when the founders themselves ordered an expensive branded Leather bag worth 15000 INR via Myntra and it got delivered in a messy plastic bag. That's it, this was a bad UX for them because they wanted to gift that bag further and then they had to think for repackaging it and justifying the packaging to look like it's a 15K product from a well known brand. That's when they thought of launching Big & Bold Products.
- Big & Bold is working on making their products personalized so that the customers can feel a personal connection with the products and the same can become a part of their personality.

The Founders of the brand, **Ankit and Disha Sangal** mentions with honesty that there is no innovation on the product end with Big & Bold products, it's just 'quality driven authentic leather' products that the brand offers to the end consumer, but the innovation they say lies in the complete process of packaging and customer interaction with the product. So, because of this the brand's market strategy was very clear, clearly working on better awareness and UX for the consumers. Better awareness on leather and its sustainability, with authentic sourcing of leather from the right manufacturers who follow all protocols, leaving less impact on the environment.

Customer acquisition & retention

The roadmap: For Big & Bold leather products, the process of winning the right customer was not difficult to think but was difficult to execute. "Being a creative agency since 2017, we have done so many projects where we used to come across clients who would ask for new branding or packaging for their products or for revamping something which is already there. So we already had/have so much experience about how to conceptualize a brand virtually but the real task was to align products for us in Big & Bold, with planning the inventory, then finalizing the products to start with, was a challenge for us. It took us 6 months to find the right manufacturers, source and finalize SKUs, get the minimum inventories, planning the strategy for social media, branding, packaging and finally conceptualizing the whole consumer interaction with the product from start to end," Ankit Sangal mentions.

Customer retention for the brand rests on the idea of word of mouth and they say that people referring their products in their circle is a big factor of success. "Our product quality, we say, is unmatched and our products if used properly will last 3 to 4 years for good or even longer. That's again what we claim, but actual 'walk the talk' will happen once we survive in the market that long, as we have just launched in December 2021, so it's just good marketing and crisp digital communication, which is the strength of our agency (Our Parent Company), with which we are trying to emerge as a strong reliable and go to brand for someone looking for leather bags. Maybe in a year's time we will have more stories to share," Ankit highlights.

Shopper behaviour

Insight to drive change: "Customer understanding also come to us from our personal experience, which goes like this- I have a fascination towards leather products, and wanted to have a leather laptop bag for myself. To my dismay, we men do not have many options in the pure leather category for executive bags! I had searched online/offline but limited options were available, on the other hand PU bags are enormous in numbers and styles, but they are not sustainable, just tacky plastic. So, my wife and I found a gap here and we thought, less options and poor packaging gives us an opportunity to get in with Big & Bold leather products," Ankit adds.

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>
> **–Disha Sangal,** Founder, Big & Bold

> WE ARE ALSO GETTING THE UNDERSTANDING ON PRICE POINT, WHICH WILL LEAD TO CONVERSION, SO THAT WE CAN GET A BETTER MIX OF GENDER NEUTRAL PRODUCTS IN THE KITTY OF BIG & BOLD.
>
> **–Ankit Sangal,** Founder, Big & Bold

"More and more young millennials are understanding the need to move on to slow fashion. They value quality, functionality, style over the cheap PU products available in the market. Thus we at Big & Bold understand our customers really well and offer them what they really need, offering them affordable luxury that is functional, stylish and timeless products. So that's how we are trying to build our approach for Big & Bold. An individual who buys a 5k or 8k bag should have a reliable product with great packaging, that's what we plan to provide to our customer," Disha highlights.

Loyalty & CRM

Kicking it off: "With e-commerce sales, data is helping us understand the price point of products that are readily being sold on repeat basis. We are able to pivot the demand and inventory accordingly to manage better stock options for further sales. We are also getting the understanding on price point, which will lead to conversion, so that we can get a better mix of gender neutral products in the kitty of Big & Bold," Ankit points out.

The brand is very wary about loyalty and mentions that the products are here to be with their customers for a good 3 or 4 years, which means they are that sturdy, if the product is used in the right way. But if things go south, on the product front, with some manufacturing defect or some unforeseen reason, they provide a simple solution that the customer has to mail back to them with the receipt and issue within 48 hours. If required the brand team may ask for a video description of the problem as well and they exchange the product outright if the issue seems genuine.

FABRIC UNLIMITED

Fabriclore was started In 2016 as an experiment by 3 colleague cum friends to make Indian crafts available at every doorstep. With a lot of learning while walking and falling, and a vision towards growth, the brand ventured into sarees, stoles, accessories and more in no time.

FABRICLORE

HIGHLIGHTS

- Fabriclore is evolving to become a hybrid product company cum marketplace, so that they can independently manage fabrics design & production and connect fashion designers and consumers on a single platform.
- The brand is moving from just a product-centric approach to a solution-centric ecosystem.
- The brand is focused 100% on clothing. Though a lot of clothing fabrics are used in home furnishing and vice versa. In the near future, they plan to launch a comprehensive range of home furnishing fabrics too.

Fabriclore is attempting to revive consumption of both traditional and modern fabrics of India on online medium bringing high-quality curated fabrics. Their brand in collaboration with modern designers is constantly inspiring creative people to achieve stand-out boho and fusion designs in both clothing and home furnishing. Even more, the traditional fabric merchant heritage of the founding team allows them to pay meticulous attention while curating each piece of fabric that they exhibit at their online store. These fabrics are sourced directly from the masters of the traditional craft and even from the traditional keepers, making them value for money. They are on course to enhance their collections with the best and widest range of tastefully curated and traditionally crafted fabrics.

Customer acquisition

Acquiring in style: "We never had an agenda to start a business in fabrics or textiles as I had no idea about it, though somewhere inside, I always yearned to be a part of a consumer design-oriented project. So, it was a mere stroke of luck. My partners and I realized the demand for fabrics in the market was not being fulfilled. Hence, after plunging into the segment deeper, we were surprised to be acquainted with the sheer diversity of fabrics in India! This is how we hatched the idea of starting a business in the same field," **Anupam Arya, Co-Founder and VP, Fabriclore** mentions.

Both the backward side supply chain i.e. fabric artisans, manufacturers, and forward side consumer i.e. designers/boutiques/ consumers are highly fragmented and diverse. So, achieving economies of scale is the biggest challenge the company is facing, but once reached a minimum feasibility mark, the market is exponentially big. Another challenge is the rising digital advertising costs. Within the digital realm, traditional means of advertising i.e. Facebook and Google are increasingly becoming very costly. So, reaching out to customers beyond traditional means of advertising is a challenge we are actively trying to overcome.

Shopper behaviour & retention

Being ready: "In addition to feedback and surveys from our set of customers, we constantly go beyond our set of media channels to see consumer sentiment trends using new age tools available as software as service. As part of product development, we engage with academia and students to capture trend forecasts in fashion and then make our own mood boards throughout the year. Feedback is central to the user journey. We have an automated workflow to capture feedback which is analysed by customer support lead and then periodically presented to the product development and marketing communications team," Anupam adds.

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> **–Anupam Arya**
> Co-Founder and VP, Fabriclore

When talking about creating new opportunities and innovation, Anupam highlights "Firstly, on the product development side, we are collaborating with brands working with proprietary yarn like LIVA to bring traditional crafts on a global scale. Secondly, we're opening a beautiful Experience Studio. The buying will still be online, but one will get to experience, touch & feel the fabrics that they already love at the studio. Thirdly, we want to be the brand to reckon with by any designer or boutique, DIY/ Sewing enthusiasts, - anybody who is conscious and is aware of what they are wearing or creating. We want Fabriclore to be the first thing that pops in mind".

Loyalty & CRM

Market watch: Being a digital first high traffic brand, data analysis is quintessential. The brand has deployed a team entirely to analyse data on the user journey. They have segmented the journey into 7 steps and apply various metrics to automate omnichannel marketing. "AI is something that is quite overrated especially given all fields and frankly we don't feel that AI is even the right term to define automations. We have developed a team entirely as a foundry of data for the rest of the organization. Each functional team has set their requirements and are held accountable to data driven analysis," Anupam adds.

"Customer retention is the hardest part in the new era of D2C. We drew this conclusion long back that loyalty has to do with what value we add in either helping or inspiring consumers.

Our experience with loyalty programs is not that great, which drew us to conclude that the loyalty essentially lies in additional value beyond discounts. Therefore, our focus is to build a great community that we call FABTRIBE. With this community we are creating a whole ecosystem of anything one would expect to design and style that includes workshops, style guides, sessions, designers profiles, and trends forecast," he sums up.

STURDY CRAFT

The founders of Hermosa Design Studio, known for their beautiful pieces and impeccably functional products. Born out of their passion for original design and the desire to create products for every home, Furnmill is at the intersection of intelligent design and accessibility in both price and attitude.

FURN MILL

HIGHLIGHTS

- The brand's goal is to create a product that will fulfill the desired functionality as well as appeal to the senses. The furniture is built for convenience, comfort and durability.
- Funrnmill is known to choose only the best raw materials to ensure every single piece is as durable as it looks.
- Catering to the large demands of millennial India - where the focus has shifted towards meaningful and thoughtful buying patterns, Furnmill promises pieces of furniture that are well-designed, multifunctional and sensibly-priced.
- Manufactured in Kota, Rajasthan with a minimum wastage policy in manufacturing, traditional craftsmanship is given form by infusing thought and responsibility into everyday products.

Furnmill provides well designed, sensibly priced and versatile 100% solid wood furniture made for the aesthetically-driven modern Indian consumer. With a brand philosophy that 'Life Happens Around Furnmill'. The brand aims to infuse the best in global technology with the warmth of Indian workmanship, to create the finest affordable yet aspirational pieces.

Customer acquisition

Keeping it environment friendly: With a certification of compliance, the impressive Quality Management System for the brand meets the requirements of ISO 9001:2015, for the manufacture and supply of wooden furniture, handcrafted items and accessories for domestic as well as export sectors. From minimally designed beds to sofas that multitask, elegant drawers and dressers, functional wardrobes, spectacular accent chairs and more, the Furnmill catalogue is an amalgamation of local techniques and global inspirations.

Pranjal Agrawal, Founder of Furmill & Hermosa Design Studio when talking about reaching the customer in a right tone says, "Customer sentiment analysis is crucial to deduce the different emotions that your customers are having while exploring the products and services. Sentiment analysis metrics can provide us with eye-opening insights, which in turn can help us offer more of what makes our customers happy. Our Customer relationship executive recommends the buyer throughout the entire buying process. We often take feedback and reviews from our customers not only after-sales but also during the sales enquiry stage. The feedback we receive from them helps us to come up with product offerings that are more suited to our consumer's needs".

Shopper behavior & retention

Studying closely: Analysis of customer sentiment is the process of automatic detection of emotions when customers interact with your products, services, or brand. Customer sentiment analysis is done through Natural Language Processing (NLP) or a set of algorithms that can detect whether the customers' emotions are positive, negative, or neutral. "We collect customer data from various sources, these include our website reviews, CRM executive interaction, feedback from retail stores, and direct consumer feedback as well as from social media platforms. This qualitative and quantitative data is then collated and drawn insights. The insights are then used to inform product decisions which in turn result in products that are more in line with consumer demands," Pranjal elaborates.

The brand focuses on building strong customer relations by offering a. Complete Buying Assistance: Buying a high-ticket size product online is always difficult for an Indian customer. The brand's CRM executives help them with virtual tours of the product, sharing real life images, explaining the complete dimensions and specifications of the product. This helps the customer build trust & credibility, and for the same leads to repeat purchases.

> THE DATA COLLECTED FROM GOOGLE ANALYTICS FOR OUR WEBSITE AND FROM OUR AD PLATFORMS SERVE AS A SOLID INDICATOR OF THE PERFORMANCE OF OUR PRODUCTS AND THE CONSUMER BUYING JOURNEY.

–Pranjal Agrawal
Founder of Furmill & Hermosa Design Studio

b. Hassle Free Buying Experience: The Furnmill team works diligently to offer a seamless experience to the customer. From arranging delivery to help with assembly and installation, their processes are defined and customer-centric. In some cases, they experience conversions after a 20 -25 days of conversation with the CRM team.

Loyalty & CRM

Right foot forward: Furnmill believes that their offering is not just product-centric, instead they are a service-based company as well. They start much before an inquiry is made by a customer, and go a long way after the purchase of the product. From new product development to the processes-everything they do at Furnmill is customer-centric. The brand is known to give the customer the perfect combination of Design, Durability & Affordability- All customers loves the product and packaging. And it is great to see how a newly launched furniture brand is being chosen by the Indian customer.

"A lot of shoppers use multiple shopping websites to shop. AI and machine learning are enabling omnichannel strategies to scale by providing insights into the changing needs and preferences of customers, creating customer journeys that scale, and delivering consistent experiences. For any omnichannel strategy to succeed, each customer touchpoint needs to be orchestrated as part of an overarching customer journey. That's the only way to reduce and eventually eliminate customers' perceptions of using one channel versus another. Creating an effective and positive omnichannel experience requires a lot of planning. To get it right, you also need the right technology at your fingertips. We extensively use data to drive omnichannel sales for the brand. We collect data from websites, google analytics, sales dashboards and promotional reports which tell us how the sales funnel performs. And then we use this data to tweak our strategy to gain optimum results," Pranjal highlights.

"The data collected from Google Analytics for our website and from our ad platforms serve as a solid indicator of the performance of our products and the consumer buying journey. For example, if we see a particular product makes it to the cart but not on the checkout page, it shows that the consumer is willing to buy but doesn't have the right incentive to pay. This helps us craft relevant discount offers and deals to nudge the consumer in the right direction," he further adds.

KEEPING IT HEALTHY

Gaia is one of the leading health and wellness brands in India with presence in more than 25,000 retail outlets, over 600+ Modern Trade outlets and leading e-commerce platforms.

GAIA
Feel Younger. Live Longer.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Gaia has 75+ products and 4 specialised lines under GAIA PLUS (nutritional supplements), GAIA LITE (caters to the need of the diabetics and weight-conscious), GAIA SPORT (fitness products to keep up their energy levels) and GAIA ORGANIC (Organic spices to adopt nature's purest solutions to lead a healthier lifestyle).
- In the past GAIA has been honoured with the 'Admired Brands of India' award and its Director, Dolly Kumar received the 'Admired Leader of India' award by VWP World Brands.
- The brand has successfully spurred a movement of healthy living among Indians by offering a wide range of healthy substitutes mainly in urban tier 1 and tier 2 cities of India.

Launched in 2009 by Cosmetic Engineer and entrepreneur, Dolly Kumar, Gaia is a health and wellness brand from its parent company, Cosmic Nutracos Solutions. Gaia is amongst the pioneers in the health and wellness industry in India and with more than 81 products, it is the only FMCG brand in India that has such a wide range of health food products and nutritional supplements, ranging from specialized supplements to everyday healthy snacks. Within just a decade, Gaia has created a strong distribution network across India with a presence across 25k+ conventional retail outlets, 600+ Modern Trade outlets, Canteen Stores Department (CSD), Central Police Canteen (CPC) as well as in e-commerce platforms like Amazon, Flipkart, Tata 1mg, Big Basket, Health Kart, etc. Gaia has also expanded its presence internationally to countries like Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, Cambodia, and others.

Customer acquisition

Winning over: After gaining an insight on how the customer behaviour is, Gaia strategizes their way forward plans and thinks of unique ways to satisfy their needs. The team aims at not only amplifying their sales but to create a loyal customer base and a community of health-conscious people who visit the brand's website for information for their overall health by going to their blogs and videos section. They also have an extensive loyalty program that helps them achieve their end goal.

"It is true that marketing is all about storytelling, and I believe that if our brand story is told in all honesty, there is no way our customer will switch to another brand. Having great products is one thing, but showcasing these products requires tremendous effort. We use all mediums possible to ensure customer retention. The product portfolio for the brand ranges from nutritional supplements like Spirulina, Glucosamine, Flax Oil, Neem, Aloe Vera, Amla to health foods like the range of green teas, infusions, muesli, honey, olive oil, cookies, oats, stevia, granola bars, trail mix, whey protein, everyday protein and organic spices. Gaia has 4 specialised lines – Gaia Plus, Gaia Lite, Gaia Sport and Gaia Organic. Our promotion strategies, offers, infomercials and social media add to all the reasons why our customers are extremely loyal to our brand," **Dolly Kumar, Founder and Director of Cosmic Nutracos**, parent company of Gaia explains.

Shopper behaviour & retention

Looking closely: "Customer sentiment is essential for our growth and

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>
> **– Dolly Kumar**
> Founder and Director of
> Cosmic Nutracos

development. We maintain a healthy line of communication with our customers in order to receive constructive feedback directly from them. We have our fully functional e-commerce website for Gaia and an active tool called Hot Jar that helps us receive direct feedback from our customers and understand their shopping behaviour. Apart from this, all queries on our social media platforms are responded to and there is a dedicated team to manage the same. We also receive emails and calls directly from our customers sharing their views and sometimes just to appreciate our efforts. Talking about offline, we have our finger on the pulse of our customer base and conduct marketing through our very diligent 'Beauty Advisors' and 'Heath Supervisors'. They are literally our eyes and ears in the market," Dolly explains.

Loyalty & CRM

Crafting customer relations: She adds, "AI is the need of the hour and an excellent tool that helps us capture data in real time and it surely has made life simple and tracking much more effective. We can now at a click see which products are performing well in the market and the products that need an extra push. We exactly know which zone is best performing, which helps us tremendously with our recognition program. We are using an effective mobile application called 'Beat Route', which is AI enabled and this is pretty much all we need for our sales force to perform in an effective manner. This app has a mechanism by which the feedback shared at any level can be accessed by the top most management level, including me, without any filters in-between."

When talking about loyalty and CRM in detail, she says, "Traditional CRM has become redundant and we feel that AI and data analysis tools have taken over every industry, and ours is no exception. Apart from offering discounts and promotional activities and loyalty programs, we make sure that the quality of our products is the best. This should be the core of any business".

LIFESTYLE-FIRST APPROACH

Group IDAM is a House of FMCG Brands backed by Ananta Capital on a mission to make multiple categories ranging from skincare, cosmetics, pet care, daily consumables, etc. accessible to one and all with its customer-first approach.

IDAM HOUSE OF BRANDS

HIGHLIGHTS

- Bella Vita Organic crossed 100 CR ARR
- Bella Vita Organic raised $10 million funds in July 2021
- IDAM House Of Brands has acquired Petveda and MeeSoGood in 2021
- Bella Vita Organic won the Most Trusted Brand for Natural and Ayurvedic products at Golden Glory Awards 2021
- IDAM House of Brands has acquired Bevzilla.
- IDAM House Of Brands, the parent company of Bella Vita Organic, launched a new Men's skincare & grooming brand BRAVE ESSENTIALs.

IDAM House of Brands comes on board with a vision that their portfolio brands should be conscious & conscientious partners in all walks of life to all demographics & genders through all age & stage life cycles. The founders of the group Aakash and Saahil come from humble backgrounds, but have a deep-rooted passion to create a global organisation with not just safe and natural products, but also to give India effective choices at accessible prices backed by a highly empowered and motivated dream team.

Customer acquisition

Customer-oriented: "Understanding how our customers engage with our brand is crucial to building a brand. It helps us shape our journey, whether it comes to formulations, packaging, or even our marketing initiatives. Noticing things like comment velocity, reactions & frequency of mentions towards the brand and products help us understand customer sentiment as well as better our future production line-up," **Saahil Nayar, CoFounder & COO, IDAM House Of Brands** mentions. "Data helps us recognise our customers, their likes and dislikes, their age, and their interests, thereby enabling us to atomise our performance marketing audience into different groups of people that we can serve better with targeted ads. We do listen to online chatter and after understanding what our customers like or have feedback for, we create formulations and new product ranges. We also try to understand buying behaviour where we can calculate the number of abandoned products, returning customers, and recurring purchases. With that in mind we can reach out to customers and make changes internally to serve them better," he adds.

Shopper behavior & retention

Keeping it effective: Customer interaction and feedback are the pillars of growth for IDAM House of Brands. The trajectory of the formulas, products, packaging is greatly impacted by the feedback that the team receives from their customers, be it on social media channels or through customer calls. The only way to gain customers' trust is to make them feel heard and to take into account their experience with the brand's products. "More than AI, data is the heart of any digital-first brand. We use data very effectively especially for omnichannel sales because wherever our online sales are and however the market reacts and behaves, we try to take a similar approach in our offline business. Similarly, when we see certain product lines do well in the retail market, we try to exponentially use them for our online consumers to ensure that online and offline consumers have equal market share and at the same time gain traction on different SQs in different categories based on geography and demographics," Saahil adds. "IDAM House of Brands is currently focusing on creating a new wallet strategy that works alongside the existing one, thereby optimizing the current users to use Bella cash often. This assists in building a flow that helps the consumer in recalling the cash. Further, this also helps in driving higher repeats which in turn helps in building retention and increasing Lifetime Value," **Aakash Anand, Founder & CEO, IDAM House of Brands** adds here.

"UNDERSTANDING HOW OUR CUSTOMERS ENGAGE WITH OUR BRAND IS CRUCIAL TO BUILDING A BRAND. IT HELPS US SHAPE OUR JOURNEY, WHETHER IT COMES TO FORMULATIONS, PACKAGING, AND EVEN OUR MARKETING INITIATIVES.

– Saahil Nayar
Co-Founder & COO, IDAM House of Brands

"IDAM HOUSE OF BRANDS IS CURRENTLY FOCUSING ON CREATING A NEW WALLET STRATEGY THAT WORKS ALONGSIDE THE EXISTING ONE, THEREBY OPTIMIZING THE CURRENT USERS TO USE BELLA CASH OFTEN.

–Aakash Anand
Founder & CEO, IDAM House of Brands

Loyalty & CRM

High on value: "Customer engagement and loyalty are very essential when it comes to creating a bond with the brand. IDAM focuses on the Recency & Frequency model that helps in building a module for a customer wherein the customers are divided into different segments. These segments include customers that are price sensitive, loyalists, potential loyalists, need attention, are important to the company, recent users, champions, about to sleep, and hibernating. We are also activating flows and campaigns around the same module so that we reach out to different customers when they are open to shop rather than bombarding their mailboxes with our communications," Aakash adds. At IDAM House of Brands the team believes that the customer is number one. This has been deeply ingrained in the brand's culture, "from our sales team to our creative team to our CSR team. The objective is to be invested in what our customers need. Should we face a problem we do what we can to reach out our customers and understand their point of view, after which we immediately start working on incorporating that feedback into our plans. At IDAM House of Brands, maintaining a customer-first approach from the CRM perspective has been the key to customer acquisition and retention. While we have curated offers and promotions for the consumers but unlike other brands, we also try to help them select suitable regimes/products in whichever category they are interacting with at IDAM. We also educate our consumers through all CRM channels like SMS, email or app pushes that help them understand and use our products better and complete the entire journey with us as a consumer, giving us 30%+ repeat customers," Saahil sums up.

ART FOR EVERYDAY

Aesthetically inspired by the Indian Subcontinent, Indus People is a visual narrative capturing the beauty and essence of the region. The brand designs and produces home and lifestyle products, each inspired by a different aspect of India, and in turn exhibits a unique story.

INDUS PEOPLE

HIGHLIGHTS

Indus People is majorly split into 3 distinctive categories with Ceramic Stoneware as the main focus:

- RETAIL: With their modern, minimal and functional designs, they serve thousands of customers across the country and internationally as well. Their high-fired, durable ceramics are long lasting and work well for everyday use as well as special occasions.
- HORECA: With their ability to custom design and manufacture high quality stoneware, exclusive to every restaurant/café they work with, the HORECA segment is a huge part of their business. They have created custom tableware for popular names like The Bombay Canteen, Subko, Aramness at Gir, Third Wave to name a few.
- CORPORATE GIFTING: Packed into beautiful, custom designed, premium quality gift boxes, their stoneware is now a known name in the Corporate Gifting field as well. Over the years, they have created custom gift boxes for brands like Burberry, Yahoo, Microsoft, American Express, Le Cordon Bleu, Vitra and so on.

Being a student of commercial art, **Aditi Chaddha Batra, Founder and Creative Director for Indus People** was trained to design for commercial purposes, and not for her own creative satisfaction – that is the main differentiator between a fine artist and a commercial artist. She says having worked as a graphic designer for over 8 years with esteemed design firms in Mumbai, she has helped 'design' brands for a lot of her clients, being a part of the creative and strategic teams. This somewhere prepared her to start off on her own business journey. While she does have her own design aesthetic, she focuses a lot on what the customer is actually looking for as she thinks that is crucial for any business to sustain.

Customer acquisition

Cutting the niche : Being a young, bootstrapped brand, their budget for Facebook and Google ads, to facilitate customer acquisition, is comparatively lower than other funded brands in the same space. While that is definitely one of the streams, they also rely heavily on their tie-ups and collaborations with restaurants and other brands to help promote the brand and drive in more customers and therefore more sales.

Since corporate and personal gifting is a very large part of the business, each box being gifted acts as an advertising tool for the brand. Every box carries a note about the products as well as the brand. People receiving the gifts very often visit the website to add more to their collection or get in touch for bulk gifting themselves. Thus, one gift box results in two customers. Aditi believes the first sale is always the easy one – you need to keep inciting the customer to come back and buy more. And you cannot have a good returning customer rate without understanding their sentiments and needs.

Shopper behaviour & retention

Knowing them good: "We pay a lot of attention to customer behavior and preferences via analysing data generated from sales through multiple formats – online, marketplaces, retail and HORECA categories. The data we receive through Instagram, Facebook and Google ad sets allows us to study the kind of products, imagery and messaging that is working better and resulting in more clicks, and in turn, more sales. This helps us strategize better when designing and launching new ranges, and planning their photoshoot and content as well," Aditi mentions.
She continues, "Through these channels, we're also able to study our customer demographic – their age, gender, geographical location and so on. Even the kind of devices that they use to make purchases on our platform helps us study the various income groups and spending capabilities".

The brand has a good customer-returning rate of around 20-30%. Since the products are not perishable, unless broken, someone who has purchased a dinner set is less likely to revisit and purchase something else – unless the brand lures

> WE PAY A LOT OF ATTENTION TO CUSTOMER BEHAVIOR AND PREFERENCES VIA ANALYISING DATA GENERATED FROM SALES THROUGH MULTIPLE FORMATS – ONLINE, MARKETPLACES, RETAIL AND HORECA CATEGORIES.
>
> **– Aditi Chaddha Batra**
> Founder and Creative Director for Indus People

them to come back by launching supporting products that they can add to their already existing range, or by launching something new that they also add to their homes. Many returning customers are observed to be gifting the brand's products to other people. "They use it, love it, and when there's an occasion to gift, they think of us and order our gift sets, " Aditi adds.

"We don't offer discounts or go on sale very often. We build relationships with our customers through good quality products, quick deliveries, immediate exchange on damaged/broken in transit pieces and above all, through our conversations with them. I strongly believe that when the customer sees or interacts with the people behind the brand, they build a connection with the brand and are more likely to come back. A lot of our methods are more old-school. More Human, I believe. That is probably what differentiates us in today's tech and data driven world," Aditi adds.

The brand uses a SaaS platform for all their invoicing and inventory management – it is linked to their website and other online and physical channels that they retail through. The data received through this platform helps the band analyze the kind of products driving more sales and therefore enables them to plan production accordingly.

Loyalty & CRM

Going that extra mile: One prominent example of how the brand offers something extra to customers can be seen in the way they design their collections. The Indus People Basics Collection, that they launched during the pandemic in 2021 for instance, is a collection that was created and launched solely based on customer interactions and learnings. Here is how:

"We work with a lot of restaurants and create custom tableware for them. These pieces go directly to the restaurant and are not retailed through any of our channels. Many of these pieces are simple, basic, everyday pieces with no prints, or designs. Each time we posted an image of something on these lines done for a restaurant, we got a lot of customers requesting to purchase the pieces. After several such requests, we decided to create an entire range of Basics that could work well for retail and can even be picked up by smaller cafes that don't match our MOQ," Aditi highlights.

"During COVID, everyone who had part-time help at home, was doing their chores themselves. I knew we immediately had to come up with an everyday range, that is easy to maintain, is microwave and dishwasher safe and that people did not need to wait for an occasion to take out. The Basics collection solved this purpose as well," she added.

ETHNIC STYLE

Kreeva is an online Indian ethnic wear store that has a personalized and tailor-made range of the best-quality Indian sarees, salwar kameez, latest lehenga choli, gowns, party wear kurtis, and designer blouses. The brand also has a separate hand-made collection of bridal lehenga choli, sharara dress for wedding, and sangeet dresses too.

Kreeva
Delivering Happiness

HIGHLIGHTS

- Kreeva.com allows a holistic online shopping experience that is way more convenient and hassle-free than an in-store shopping tour.
- The user-friendly website has distinct categories such as sarees, salwar kameez, lehenga choli, gowns, kurtis, and blouses. Customization options and style selection is made easier because you can contact their trendsetting fashion experts for outfit ideas right for your body type and occasion.
- With a huge base of domestic and international buyers, Kreeva has reached nations such as the USA, the UK, Australia, South Africa, Singapore, New Zealand, and many more.

With the prime focus on India's rich heritage, Kreeva's team designs stunning ensembles that make every woman more feminine, allowing her to embrace her beauty. The brand has a big team of well-trained professionals and craftswomen who have helped the company become a leading name in India's fashion fraternity. The label is nothing less than the perfect combination of culture, festive feels, and rich Indian traditions.

Customer acquisition

Reading the pulse: Kreeva is a home-grown D2C brand and the major advantage for the brand is its ability to connect, collect and understand the feedback of the users in real-time. This feedback is served to the data analytics team who helps the brand with useful insights. These insights play an important role in building the communication strategy for targeting the right audience and building a structured engagement approach for the retention of users. "We continue to work on building and improving our customer loyalty program, regular check-in with the overall feedback of all our sales and most importantly keeping a steady approach towards building smooth and clear omnichannel communication and feedback systems for our users," **Manthan Dhameliya, Owner, Kreeva** highlights.

Customers' emotions and sentiments have a direct impact on how you position your business and market your products. So the team is dedicated to building a smooth & quality customer experience right from the time they place the order to the delivery of the product and beyond. For every order cancellation, they make sure they try to understand the loophole by connecting directly with the user and implementing their feedback into the brand's next range and offering. The data collected from the searches and sales help them in building campaigns and product ranges in accordance with the needs of the users.

In order to start connecting and developing a deeper understanding of the empowered consumer/user data analytics and metrics is used. It helps bring consumer insights and behaviour into the picture and is definitely a 'blessing' for all the online stores and e-commerce stores in the current era. The data is highly beneficial in the following ways:

Various algorithms help the brand in predicting the next big thing/trend that will possibly help online stores to disrupt the market. The data collected from Social media interaction help them monitor trends and understand how the users have perceived Kreeva. Further, establishing a connection with the audience is the top-most priority for the brand and along with this, deciding the pricing is a big factor.

Just like other online businesses, Kreeva too uses data to take aware pricing decisions, by studying their competitors.

Shopper behaviour & retention

Timely coordination: AI and data have already impacted customer service and the way users interact with the brand. "We definitely incorporate data and AI to tap customers and drive sales in various aspects. Tools like product recommendation

> WE ARE CONSTANTLY WORKING TOWARDS BUILDING AND IMPROVING OUR CUSTOMER LOYALTY PROGRAM, REGULARLY KEEPING A CHECK ON THE FEEDBACK FROM OUR CUSTOMERS. WE ALSO BELIEVE THAT MAINTAINING A CONSISTENT APPROACH TO ESTABLISHING A SMOOTHER AND CLEARER OMNICHANNEL COMMUNICATION AND FEEDBACK SYSTEM FOR OUR USERS IS CRUCIAL.
>
> **– Manthan Dhameliya**
> Owner, Kreeva

are helping us showcase the right kind of products based on the cache and cookie data collected by the software from the active users scrolling on our website. This gives us an insight into the minds of the users and helps us in creating a targeted recommendation to them which are closer to their needs and ultimately promote sales and brand recall," Dhameliya adds.

"We are actively involving AI & data in order to listen and understand our users. We are living in a time where there are rapid changes happening around us and that definitely influences the shopping trends and needs of the users. Merging AI and data analytics with personalized human touch helps us in building and improving our product ranges, gives a better understanding of our potential customers and also helps us in optimizing our communication strategies across all channels," he mentions.

Being a full-fledged online brand, they heavily invest in omnichannel marketing strategy in order to tap every possible opportunity to engage with the customers and increase brand awareness. They believe in the power of personalization and give special attention to detail to create a smooth customer experience while they are shopping with Kreeva. The team goes the extra mile by investing into providing and understanding the customer needs in case of any order cancellations or returns and help them in suggesting/recommend them with products, which are in sync with their needs and expectations.

Loyalty & CRM

Keeping it trendy: The brand offers a complete shopping experience with a supremely affordable and reasonably priced wide range of top quality materials articulated to the utmost precision according to the latest trends and styles. They also focus on building special ranges around major festivals and seasons in India to entice the audience and be available to them in these happy celebratory times. The team at Kreeva also makes sure that the customers are given top priority and assistance for efficient and secure operations from order placement to order fulfillment and beyond.

SUBTLE TOUCH

Jaipur based brand, Live Linen deep dives into the past to tastefully reinvent history with detail, in order to create and bring up the humble fabric -Linen.

LIVE LINEN

HIGHLIGHTS

- Live Linen fabricates every product after the order is processed to provide a satisfying experience rather than merely a shopping sphere.
- Crafted specifically for a particular consumer, you can expect a high-quality piece with fresh craftsmanship.
- The brand also enjoys educating their customers about linen and witnessing them fall in love with it while incorporating it into their daily lives.

The first practical known use of linen dates back to the early 8000 BC in Egypt. Any material that can stand the test of time for that long, is surely worth investing in. **Nimit Singhi, Founder of Live Linen** seized that opportunity and turned the silky, soft linen into an array of household products that are of premium quality along with his skillful team of designers and stylists. In fact, that's what Singhi describes their brand's ethos as – taking a quality material and teaming it up with quality production. One can't go wrong with that now, can they?

Customer acquisition

For the customer: From striped pastel throws to aesthetic potholders; from duvets that demand people to stay in bed to dresses that fit and feel like butter, the wide range of items on their catalogue ensures there is a 'must have' product for everyone. If anyone is looking at revamping their homes or giving a makeover to their wardrobe, Live Linen and their impressive catalogue caters to everyone's personality, opinion and style.

One of the most important things for the brand is for people to connect with their personal style and be confident in it. With the vision of letting the audience choose their style and truly own it too, Live Linen strives to rise above the trends that are creatively exhaustive. They want the audience to walk towards the future, while being comfortable in the present, with the past gracefully tagging along. And a relationship that requires such a commitment should be with the fabric that makes you feel at home, and with a brand that personifies the very idea.

The brand also caters to occasions that are unique and special. With a section that lets people personalize the products, rightfully signifies the thought and care the brand stands by. Apt for gifting, customizations add the touch of trust that every customer looks for while shopping. You can choose from table napkins, subtle yet elegant cushion covers or even an apron with your name on it, helping you whip up the best of meals.

Whether it is twirling in easy, breezy apparels or dressing up your space in linen home décor, it's the need of the hour to move towards comfortable yet stylish brands in every aspect. Live Linen is the one stop shop for adding the right kind of aesthetics.

Taking ageless material and giving it a modern look is no easy feat but Live Linen is doing it with great product launches, month after month. Not only is each item evergreen, they make you feel evergreen. Live Linen is giving people the reminder that it's actually great to slow down and embrace the style that defines but doesn't label.

Shopper behaviour & retention

Keeping a tab on customer satisfaction: "We at Live Linen take pride in our customers' complete satisfaction thus we

> WE AT LIVE LINEN TAKE PRIDE IN OUR CUSTOMERS' COMPLETE SATISFACTION THUS WE ASK FOR QUICK FEEDBACK AFTER A FEW DAYS OF PRODUCT DELIVERY. WE WELCOME BOTH GOOD AND NEGATIVE INPUTS IN ORDER TO GROW AS A BRAND THAT REINTRODUCES THE INCOMPARABLE COMFORT OF LINEN TO THE WORLD THROUGH OUR EXCEPTIONAL CLOTHES AND HOME FURNISHINGS.
>
> **–Nimit Singhi**
> Founder of Live Linen

ask for quick feedback after a few days of product delivery. We welcome both good and negative inputs in order to grow as a brand that reintroduces the incomparable comfort of linen to the world through our exceptional clothes and home furnishings," Singhi points out.

The brand's customer service team is always available to assist customers in finding the perfect linen to complement their wardrobe or space. They also pride in custom orders they take to help everyone find their true size, serving every need with lots of attention and patience.

Loyalty & CRM

Data savvy: Live Linen uses data to analyze their clients' demands, and this the brand notes helps the marketing team focus and move forward on the proper path. They see the purchase pattern of every customer to know how a particular product is performing based on the demographics.

"Analyzing data is an effective technique to determine whether our efforts are on track and what further we can improve. Examining our consumers' demographics is an excellent approach to do so. After thoroughly reading them, we assess and plan our new launches and other designs based on the reports," Nimit adds.

The brand has a team who dedicatedly talk to their clients' opting for custom orders, offering suggestions, and for reviews. The designers on top of that are always on their toes and available for design-related recommendations, discussing current styles, and planning future patterns.

Aside from their ready-to-help customer support team, they hold gift drives for their frequent clients to show them how much the brand appreciates their trust in Live Linen. Each gift is carefully crafted to brighten their day, with a hint of personalization in the form of their name engraved on the top. Every buyer receives one-on-one assistance to ensure a seamless purchasing experience through social media, emails, and phone calls.

BAKING IT HEALTHY

Delhi-based Paw Petisserie makes tasty treats for pet dogs and cats using only premium pet-friendly ingredients.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Paw Petisserie caters to both dogs and cats, with mostly all the products on the menu suitable for both.
- The brand retails all across India through its own website and has an offline presence for customers too.
- Innovation is at the core for the brand and Paw Petisserie's food enhancer powders and mini loaves in banana bread and coconut bread varieties offer a break from the conventional products. The bakery's cutest offering, however, is its name engraved biscuits, which makes great gifts for other pet parents.

Paw Petisserie's journey started after Cristo (her pet) entered the founder's life. **Yashika Arora, Founder, Paw Petisserie** decided to venture into creating baked goods for dogs to ensure her pooch Cristo enjoys only the best treats, which escalated into making sure that these high quality goodies are enjoyed by as many pooches as possible!

This is the reason the brand says for which they identify the importance of the right food for the pets and how important it is to make sure your loved ones receive nothing but the best. Paw Petisserie, makes sure that our pets get to eat some wonderful items, keeping in mind their health by using only dog-safe and pet-safe ingredients. The brand is always experimenting in their kitchen and working towards adding new goodies to their menu regularly. Their cakes, cupcakes and treats are organic and made with the goodness of real ingredients.

Customer acquisition

Hitting on the palate: For Yashika and her brand, delivering quality by understanding the customer is a two-way process and involves decoding the sentiments of both the pet parents and the taste bud of the pets, "All our items are made with only pet-safe ingredients, keeping their health in mind. We are always experimenting in our kitchen and add new goodies to our menu regularly. Our handcrafted cakes, cupcakes, and treats are the perfect blend of love and goodness made from real ingredients", Yashika mentions.

Making each item with only pet safe ingredients along with making it appealing to the eyes for the pet parents to buy, both together can sometimes be very challenging. And of course the taste and smell of the products matter a lot so that the pets can enjoy it with no rejections, so the team puts an extra effort to ensure that every fresh bake is appealing, healthy, and tasty. A spin on the word 'Patisserie', Paw Petisserie was the perfect name for Yashika's business. Though the pandemic has driven a sharp focus on health concerns, the brand started well before it. She emphatically asserts, "Making healthy goodies for pets has always been our biggest priority — that is the very foundation our brand was built on!"

Shopper behaviour & retention

Understanding with depth: "Marketing with the right information and to the right audience is what matters the most. Making sure we let the pet parents know what exactly is in the products helps them trust our products even more. More than marketing, understanding customers is very important for us. Understanding if the pet is allergic to anything or dislikes anything specific is important for us to know before we start preparing any order

> CUSTOMER NEEDS AND REQUIREMENTS ARE WHAT HELPS US UPDATE OUR MENU. KEEPING IN MIND WHICH FLAVOUR OR WHAT KIND OF PRODUCTS ARE ENJOYED BY THE CUSTOMERS THE MOST IS WHAT HELPS US CURATE NEW ITEMS AND PRODUCTS. WE LIKE TO KEEP THE CUSTOMERS ENGAGED THROUGH OUR SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITIES, EMAILERS, AND A FEW PERSONAL MESSAGES AS WELL.
>
> **–Yashika Arora**
> Founder, Paw Petisserie

so we make sure we give them an option to specify the allergies before taking any orders. Feedback is very important for us to know what and how the customer feels about our services. From taking orders to delivering them, each and every step is equally important for us and getting reviews/feedback from the customers help us analyze what the customer really likes or did not like in the entire process," Yashika notes.

While Paw Petisserie ships goodies pan-India through its website, some of the more tricky items like cakes, cupcakes, and ice creams have restricted delivery in Delhi and Gurugram. The brand has so far gained ample customers through mostly word of mouth publicity. The team takes an extra effort to connect with the customers to gain their feedback and then uses the same to reinvent their offerings for the furry beings.

She adds, "It's great to see India moving in the right direction of becoming a pet-friendly nation, but we still need to put in more effort as a pet community to ensure lasting change. One way to do this is by ensuring people are careful about what they feed their pets as many are not aware of what can be harmful or toxic for their pet family members."

Loyalty & CRM

Keeping them for life: "Customer needs and requirements are what helps us update our menu. Keeping in mind which flavour or what kind of products are enjoyed by the customers the most is what helps us curate new items and products. We like to keep the customers engaged through our social media activities, emailers, and a few personal messages as well. Our products are customisable according to the pets needs (if allergic to anything) and likings. All the items in our menu are gluten-free, salt-free, sugar–free, artificial colour-free and artificial flavour-free, keeping it completely safe for the consumption of pets," Yashika further explained.

FLAVOUR OF HEALTH

Polka Pop is India's first 100% Naturally Flavoured Sparkling Water Company that was established in 2020. The brand prides itself in saying that the products have been conceptualized, formulated and manufactured all in India!

HIGHLIGHTS

- Currently Polka Pop is available in 4 flavours – Peach, Orange, Cranberry & Lemon-Lime. The brand is planning to introduce a couple of more flavours this year and hope to diversify into other beverage products in the coming years.
- The brand follows an omnichannel approach and focuses on both offline and online channels.
- The brand plans to scale up their production and sales and be able to deliver anywhere in India within 3 days.
- They also aim to be available across all modern retail stores across the country.

Polka Pop is one of the few (or only) beverages that doesn't use sugar or sweeteners of ANY kind in their drinks. This is a first for the packaged beverages industry! Not just that, Polka Pop positions itself as the perfect all-occasion fizzy drink that complements a healthy lifestyle. Moreover, keeping the planet in mind is one of Polka Pop's core values. It makes all packaging related decisions keeping this value at its base. For instance, they use transparent PET bottles as Greenhouse Gas emissions across the lifecycle of the PET is much lower than the alternatives.

Customer acquisition

Tapping the right audience: **Gaurav Khemka, Founder & CEO, Polka Pop** says, "It's very simple to understand customer sentiment – when we started to now, we have been making it a point to talk to customers regularly. This helps us understand what is working and what is not working across our entire customer journey – be it on the website or just the general product experience. This is where we learn the most about our customers and their needs, wants and preferences. While we still have a long way to go, we've been able to come this far only because of our customers".

Analyzing the sentiments help shape customer-centric approaches and the brand's entire approach starts with the customer, they say they don't know any other way. Be it operations or communication, the customer comes first. For instance, if orders are running late, the brand takes an effort to send some Polka Pop bottles from nearby stores to ensure that the customers don't run out of stock until they sort out the delivery issue.

Shopper behaviour & retention

AI for help: When asked about employing AI to predict customer behaviour, Gaurav mentions "We're a little too small to start using AI, but we track our entire sales performance across channels and geographies to understand which SKU, location or channel is doing well. We also track our operations performance across different channels such as time taken to dispatch and deliver to understand where delays happen and to fix those leaks. Most of our presence is still online, and offline is something we are building alongside. We are in the process of building processes around data for offline, which needs to be tackled very differently".

Data is the cornerstone of e-commerce sales. Everything from the efficacy of the website to creative strategy is tracked through data. "As mentioned earlier, our operations are also dependent on this data. Something as simple as optimizing delivery costs, or opening new warehouses is a function of this data. Without data, it would be very difficult to scale e-commerce sales," Gaurav adds.

While metrics like repeat rates are very important, the brand team also believes that 1-1 conversations with customers give us insights that data can't, especially at this early stage.

Loyalty & CRM:

Unique prospect: The brand is still working

> WE ALWAYS LISTEN TO CUSTOMERS REGARDLESS OF THE REVIEWS AND FOLLOW-UP WITH THEM IN CASE OF A BAD REVIEW TO UNDERSTAND WHAT WENT WRONG. WE HAVE WALKED AWAY FROM THOSE CONVERSATIONS WITH VERY HAPPY CUSTOMERS.
>
> **–Gaurav Khemka**
> Founder & CEO, Polka Pop

on varied loyalty programs. However, as of now they offer the customers loyalty points on every purchase and on referrals that they can redeem on their purchase offering them significant discounts. Further when highlighting on customer retention strategies that the D2C ecosystem is employing, he says "There are a mix of strategies that most brands in the ecosystem use. This can range from subscription plans, retention emails and phone calls. That apart, we always listen to customers regardless of the reviews and follow-up with them in case of a bad review to understand what went wrong. We have walked away from those conversations with very happy customers. In one case, a customer complained that they didn't like the product at all, and it was just sitting at home. We realized that maybe the customer wasn't used to sparkling water. We spoke to them and shared a fun ice tea recipe with them. A few days later, we received an image with the words – Love it! In another case, one of our repeat customers had a significant delay in their delivery due to a change in delivery partner mid delivery. We followed up and re-dispatched their order. He ended up paying for both boxes!"

Gaurav says that the brand is still in the process of building that strong customer base. One the challenges that they still face is introducing people to this concept & category called flavoured Sparkling Water. The challenge was and still is to make the consumers understand why sparkling water is a better alternative to other carbonated drinks, a fun substitute to water, a great mixer and something that could become a part of their daily lifestyle.

"The customer calls are the scariest and most meaningful part of our week because that's where we learn the most. We like to stay honest and care about the things that are important to our customers – an important one being sustainability. We speak a lot about how our customers can integrate Polka Pop into their daily lifestyle, what recipes they could create and always keep our lines of communication open. We run ads on Instagram and Facebook to help improve discoverability.The most important technology we use is a customer CRM that allows us to track our conversations with our customers because that's where we are able to understand them better," Gaurav highlights.

TAILORED FIT

Tailor & Circus was founded in 2016 after observing significant gaps in both men's and women's underwear when it came to comfort and performance. As a brand, the company remains receptive to the evolving needs of their customers by constantly engaging in R&D with regards to improving their products, testing, and taking feedback on board.

Tailor & Circus

HIGHLIGHTS

- The brand sources the highest grade yarn that is spun exclusively at Lenzing authorized mills to ensure only finest fabric becomes Tailor & Circus underwear.
- All Tailor & Circus intimates have been finished with a 100% heavy metal free Bio Wash (Fresche®) that actively fights bacteria and microbes for a minimum of 33 washes.
- The Tailor & Circus factories are WRAP® and Sedex® certified, a standard that both protects and promotes all workers and creates an environment of trust and accountability.
- The brand uses a completely plastic-free packaging for all their products. Banana fibre, upcycled fabric and recycled paper go into creating a beautiful and ecologically sound kit for your favourite basics.

Tailor & Circus has recognized that customers were considering it near impossible to find innerwear that didn't compromise comfort for aesthetics, or aesthetics for softness, or softness for sexuality. The hyper-sexualization of traditional underwear had led to a significant drop in comfortable options for women and the gender bias and hyper-masculinity led to a shortage of interesting options for men.

Customer acquisition

Understanding the customer demands: "We understood that people want to see real bodies being celebrated and accepted. With inclusivity at our core, we use diverse people as models without being biased about their weight or other physical features. We don't airbrush or hide scars, stretch marks, cellulite, or shapes in any way to drive home the point that it is not about what your underwear can hide about you but about what it can cherish. We knew that we had discovered and fulfilled a significant market gap in the innerwear industry after our first invite-only beta round of products sold out within 24 hours," comments **Gaurav Durasamy - Co-Founder and Managing Director.**

"We are continuing to listen to our customers' wants and needs. For example, there is a growing need among women for comfortable and long-lasting maternity wear. Hence, we have just introduced a first-of-its-kind line of Maternity Lounge Bras that are uniquely crafted to be worn through pregnancy, nursing, and beyond," he adds.

Shopper behavior & retention

Noting the customer trends: Tailor & Circus studies customer patterns closely at a micro-level and, based on what they can glean; they expand into other verticals while also diving deeper into their core offering. "We use this information to understand the different innerwear needs of each customer and design our customization options accordingly - by helping each customer plan their specific kits and making the process of switching seamless. We try to identify the lifecycle of usage for each person and incentivize them to repeat their purchases with us based on that usage. Customer data such as demographics, interests, purchase patterns, and interactions with the brand are used to make our marketing efforts more focused and targeted," **Vasanth Sampath, Co-founder - Operations , Tailor & Circus.**

"As a D2C brand, we sell our products through our own platform. This enables us to track a lot of data such as customer purchase behaviour and preferences in styles, sizing, and designs. This helps us anticipate customer needs and plan our inventory accordingly. We ensure that we take feedback from our customers at every stage and we plan our next collection and product categories around this. These practices have given us a rapidly-growing repeat customer rate," **Abishek Elango, Co-founder and Creative Director, Tailor & Circus** further added.

Loyalty & CRM

Keeping the community together: Tailor & Circus has a strong community on

> WE USE THIS INFORMATION TO UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENT INNERWEAR NEEDS OF EACH CUSTOMER AND DESIGN OUR CUSTOMIZATION OPTIONS ACCORDINGLY.

–Vasanth Sampath
Co-founder - Operations, Tailor & Circus

> WITH INCLUSIVITY AT OUR CORE, WE USE DIVERSE PEOPLE AS MODELS WITHOUT BEING BIASED ABOUT THEIR WEIGHT OR OTHER PHYSICAL FEATURES.

–Gaurav Durasamy
Co-founder and Managing Director, Tailor & Circus

> WE GET AT LEAST FIVE MESSAGES A DAY FROM PEOPLE WHO TELL US THAT THEY ARE SO PROUD TO HAVE BEEN REPRESENTED AND THAT, FOR THE FIRST TIME, THEY FEEL VISIBLE TO THE FASHION INDUSTRY.

–Abishek Elango
Co-founder and Creative Director, Tailor & Circus

Instagram who are truly the brand's biggest advocates - they support the brand's body-positive movement and brand positioning, and they frequently participate in their community photo shoots. "We frequently go back to these customers to ensure their ideas are acknowledged and often implemented in our product stream. Our customers frequently write to us about their overwhelming satisfaction with our products and their eagerness for our next set of prints. We often have customers who end up buying additional products for their partners, their children, their parents and in some cases, even their grandparents. They love that they no longer have to shell out 2000 rupees for far less comfortable innerwear," Gaurav highlights.

"We get at least five messages a day from people who tell us that they are so proud to have been represented and that, for the first time, they feel visible to the fashion industry. Overall, the response to both our products and our ideology has been excellent. We also offer a 100% satisfaction guarantee for all new customers on our website – in case someone does not receive the right fit or size, the brand immediately ships out a free replacement without them having to return the used product. This is important for a product category like innerwear since there is no standardized fitting or size charts between brands, hence it is often difficult for consumers to find the right size without trying the product.," Abishek adds.

Looking ahead, they want to build specialisations and address multiple niche groups within the innerwear category. For example, they are aiming for period underwear, wheelchair comfort underwear, trans-inclusive underwear, disposable underwear, etc. Going by their expertise in making unisex, body-positive, and comfortable underwear, this long-term dream could become a reality sooner than expected.

STYLE WITH AN EDGE

A name that signifies enthusiasm, The Gusto is not just a company that makes bags; it's a place with no compromises, neither on the style quotient, nor on the core philosophy. Every product is handcrafted by India's most skilled artisans, and each offering is wholeheartedly vegan. Leaving no stone unturned in providing premium grade products, if it's excellent, if it's earthy, if it's exquisite, it's The Gusto.

THE GUSTO

HIGHLIGHTS

- Within a few months since the start they have gone from serving 2 orders a day to 30 to 40 orders a day.
- The customers love the fact that they now offer personalization options for bags and accessories.
- Globally, they have launched their first store in the UAE, which has been very well received.
- Gusto is further expanding the work life organization philosophy to include work desks, office gadgets, and office stationery. They have enjoyed great customer acceptance of their office decor range, followed by overwhelming leads in this arena.
- They are experiencing a monthly upward graph with 30% to 40% growth in sales every passing month.

Founded by **Mansi Gambhir,** the idea behind creating a home-grown brand with a difference originated from her seasoned experience in bag manufacturing. Having produced stellar products for many leading national and international players, Mansi realized that the Indian market needs a company that not only brings uncluttered bags, but also offers cruelty free solutions. This sparked the unforgettable journey to bring The Gusto to life.

Today, with a sprawling presence in the B2C as well as B2B sector, there has been no looking back for the brand, and sky's the limit when it comes to the future. Launching two to three styles every month, The Gusto is also expanding globally, with an exclusive website for the UAE and many more to come. From the quirky college going teen, the novice employee to the suave corporate executive, The Gusto has managed to win hearts all over, one bag at a time.

Customer acquisition

Being quick & ready: "We believe today's customer is an extremely smart and intelligent individual. Given the large number of options and exposure, providing a quality product on budget and meeting a need is imperative. Every product we create is created with the needs of modern working professionals in mind. Researching and speaking to people in their age group before developing our collections allows us to design the best bags for them. The organic growth we have experienced so far has been incredible. The data we possess about our customers is excellent, so we can target people with similar characteristics and locations," Mansi highlights.

Passion, purpose and perseverance always make magic! What began as a dream to build a local brand that offers world class quality, cruelty free materials and avant-garde designs has now blossomed into The Gusto, synonymous with the best of bags, wallets, clutches and many more accessories for men and women.

Shopper behaviour & retention

Understanding the pulse: Customer listening is a big part of the journey at The Gusto. The brand actively listens to their customer needs and what helps the shopper wants. This allows them to understand the customer needs with more clarity, Mansi here adds, "we totally rely on our customers, our customers are heroes to us, and we are here to provide products that help them achieve their goals. Each

> ENTHUSIASM IS THE ESSENCE OF THE GUSTO, AND WE STRIVED TO BRING IT INTO THE LIVES OF OUR CUSTOMERS BY ORGANIZING EVERYDAY ESSENTIALS IN ONE PLACE. TO US, QUALITY AND UTILITY GO HAND IN HAND WITH FASHION. HAVING PREVIOUSLY MANUFACTURED BAGS BEFORE FOUNDING THE GUSTO, WE UNDERSTAND THE NEED FOR A BAG THAT LOOKS GREAT AND IS STURDY, AS WELL AS SOLVING A FUNCTIONAL PROBLEM.
>
> **–Mansi Gambhir**
> Founder, The Gusto

launch teaches us something about our users and we use that knowledge to make our products better and more useful".

For customer retention she says, "It's obvious that marketing is one option, but our team is always available to answer and help the customer in any way they can. Our repeat customer rate is very high, and that's one of our greatest achievements. WE OFFER GREAT QUALITY AT AN AFFORDABLE PRICE. We don't give any false promises to lure customers but make sure we fulfill what we promise. In fact, women love what they get and we had one such instance where a principal from a renowned school from the north of India was so impressed with our bags that she ordered them for her entire staff on Women's Day".

Loyalty & CRM

Getting closer: "Enthusiasm is the essence of THE GUSTO, and we strived to bring it into the lives of our customers by organizing everyday essentials in one place. To us, quality and utility go hand in hand with fashion. Having previously manufactured bags before founding THE GUSTO, we understand the need for a bag that looks great and is sturdy, as well as solving a functional problem. With the world's shift towards sustainability, cruelty free leather was an obvious choice.," Mansi adds.

Bags are an extension of every woman's personality, and therefore, they are created taking into account the specific needs of a working professional. The brand keeps challenging themselves to improve their styles as well as quality as a company. Their minimalistic design language makes them easy to style in your work and leisure wear. The team wishes to make The Gusto a brand synonymous with premium quality sustainable accessory shops. "We have received overwhelming support for our highly functional bags. Our success has been driven primarily by organic growth and word of mouth, and we have experienced an upward run rate month over month," she sums up.

HEALTH GOALS

Upnourish is India's first D2C brand that's focusing on the meal replacement category and aspires to become the market leaders of this segment. It is catering to the conscious clientele and looking to add health with every product offering.

upnourish

HIGHLIGHTS

- No. of Unhealthy Meals Replaced since Upnourish was born (6 months ago) - 10000+
- No. of unique customers - 800+
- Recurring Customer Rate - ~30%
- No. of Unique Customers Visited Upnourish Website: ~36000
- UpNourish Marketplace Presence - Amazon, Healthkart, Wellversed, Herbkart
- Upnourish Modern Trade Presence (coming up soon)- Godrej Nature's Basket & Freshpik

The traditional fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) brand faces varied challenges from supply-side pressures, retail challenges, competitive threats and ever-rising consumer expectations. But the D2C model has come up with a different approach, solving all the customers' expectations and adding personalization for every customer.

'UpNourish' with its brand standing 'get fitter, leaner and bolder' entered the market to introduce customers with advanced Meal-Replacement Products that seamlessly merge with our lives, boosting our daily energy and outlook. It is extremely customer-centric and the brand promises that it will help every customer reach their ideal future self, with the reins in your hands. Here's how it happens: All the ingredients in their meal replacement products are backed by science and are added after much research to give your body the best that it deserves.

Customer acquisition

Customer focused: "The most important aspect of D2C business is customer first approach. Every brand looking to build business around the D2C space must make the whole purchase experience of the prospect customer 100% risk free. Upnourish for instance, offers COD, EMI along with other payment options to make it easy for customers to purchase without worrying much. We have implemented a 24/7 customer support mechanism using the help of technology to help customers get order status visibility throughout the order lifecycle and fast query resolving system. Hence, customer can reach out and get their queries resolved in least possible time," **Kuonal Lakhapati, Co-founder, UpNourish** mentions.

Shopper behaviour & retention

Change is in the air: Post pandemic, the brand has seen tremendous spike in e-commerce usage and adoption due to movement restriction and the lockdown. During this time, leveraging the growth in this particular space, they also saw many new companies trying to build new businesses and evolve. Essentially, in D2C approach, brands cut the middlemen and straight reach to the end customer. With this approach, any brand can save middlemen margins and obtain customer centric data to add more value to the end customer.

The team at Upnourish, listen to their customer very carefully. They are using specific tools to capture customer feedback, which is the most important aspect of business. There are different levels of feedback for different parameters like product cost, packaging, delivery SLAs, payment options etc. Which they typically capture and use the same to better their products and service. The idea is to make the products and service easy and risk free that anyone who is looking to try the products can do so without a thought.

Strategy for retention: "Customer retention strategies can work only when customer identifies value in the product.

> DATA HELPS US DEVELOP IMPROVE INTERNAL SYSTEMS, SERVICE, PRODUCTS WHICH IMPACTS CUSTOMER RETENTION AND ULTIMATELY RESULTS IN INCREASE IN BOTH TOP AND BOTTOM LINE OF THE BUSINESS ACROSS DIFFERENT PLATFORMS.
>
> **–Kuonal Lakhapati**
> Co-founder, UpNourish

Post that, it is all about product pricing and service. We've identified people and put them into different baskets depending upon their purchase patterns and life-time value. Basis on the same, we offer discounts to return back loyalty for repeatedly purchasing our products. Also, we take into account things like when customer is most likely to re-order and send them reminders to purchase, etc. Talking about service, our team is always extending to ensure our customers are happy. For e.g. customizing orders, re-scheduling order delivery date, answering queries, etc.," Kuonal highlights.

Loyalty & CRM

Data to win loyalty: "Data and the value generated from it is the most important factor that can help a D2C brand succeed. We also analyze customer's buying pattern and frequency. With this data, we offer them other products that could be of their interest along with customized discount offers. We are also analyzing changing customer behavior depending upon the time of the year, season, weather, etc. and working to develop our products/service in the content of sense we are deriving from the data we have gathered. We are also using tools to help us understand customer persona and behavior across different platforms," Kuonal highlights.

He adds, "Data helps us understand our customer better, their choices, purchase patterns, and their expectations. Data literally shows you the health of business, customer sentiments, scope of development, etc. Data helps us develop improve internal systems, service, products which impacts customer retention and ultimately results in increase in both top and bottom line of the business across different platforms".

Further, the brand offers discounts to customers depending on different parameters. They are always keen on offering the right products to the right audience and offer right discount to the customers who rightly deserve it. Upnourish also has consultancy arm that extends support on consumption of meal replacement products and if the customer is trying to achieve any particular fitness goal along with analyzing their health reports to help them holistically improve their health.

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